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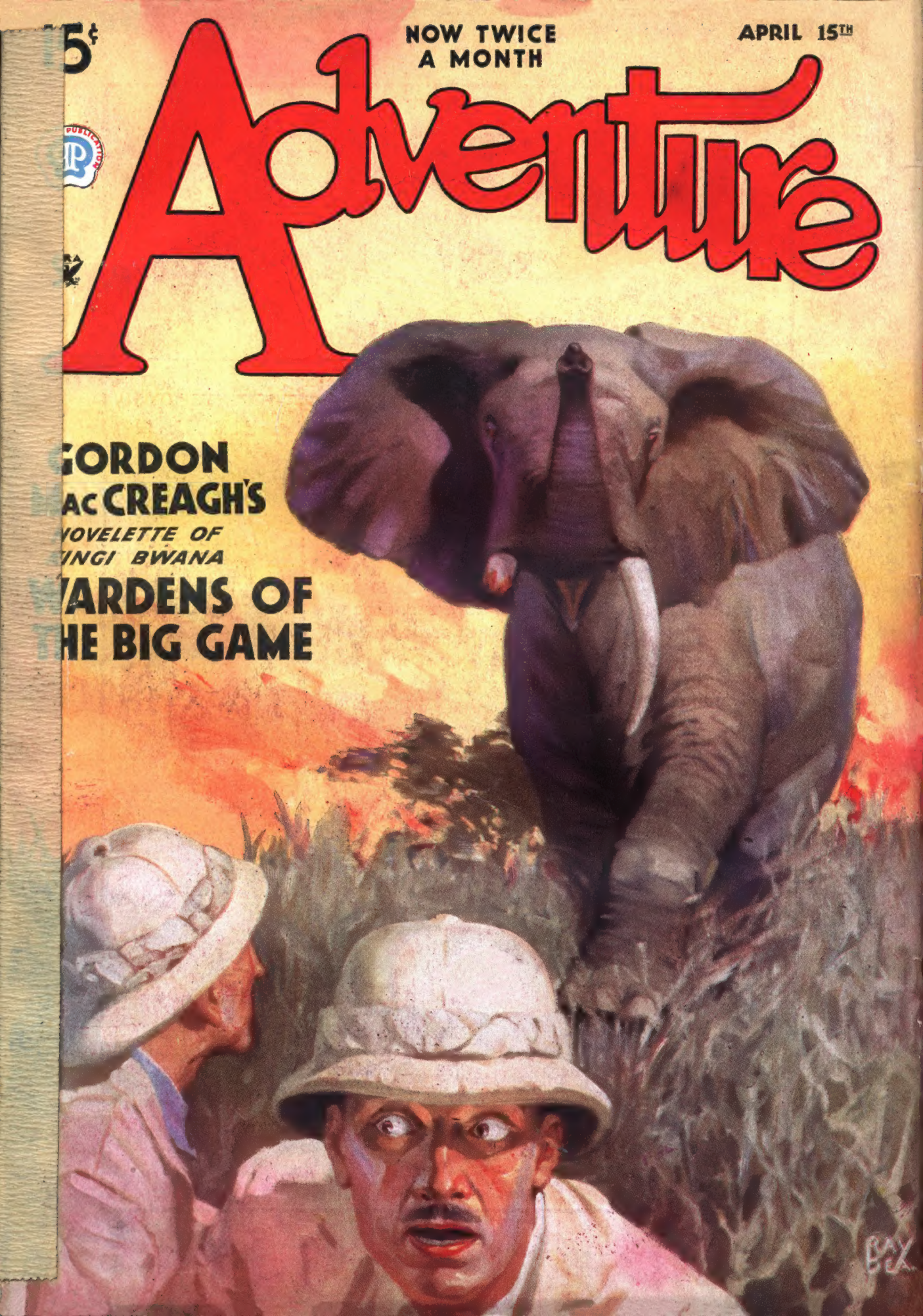
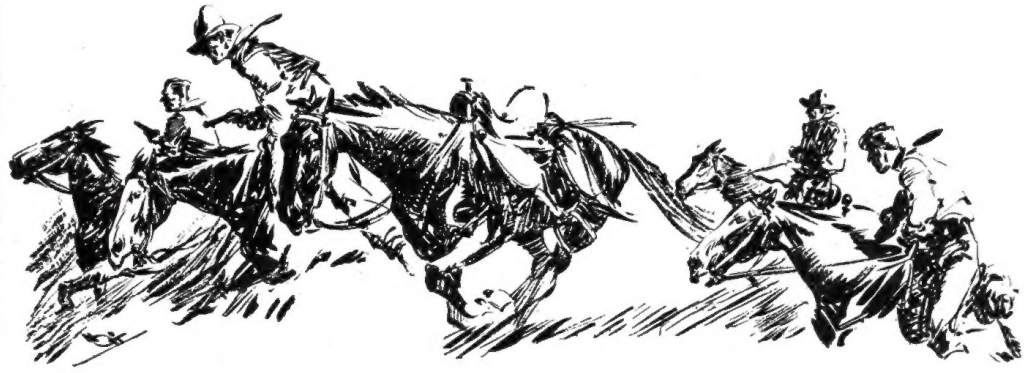
Adventure

GORDON MacCREAGH'S
NOVELETTE OF
KINGI BWANA
WARDENS OF THE BIG GAME



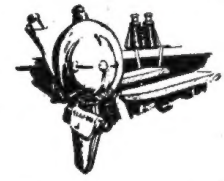


HE'LL DO TO RIDE THE RIVER WITH

THE sheriff rides up to the ranchhouse and hails his old friend. "I'm goin' after the Wild Bunch tomorrow, Lafe," he says, "and I'm needin' another deputy. Somebody kind of special. Now this new hand of yours from Wyoming. I hear—" The rancher squints at the distant ranges a moment before replying. Then, *"He'll do to ride the river with,"* he says.

The young Third Mate looks at his brand new ticket and the fine type blurs before his eyes. But the words in longhand stand out bold and clear. *"Any ship, any ocean."*

The newly graduated cadet laughs "I'm an officer and a gentleman now—by act of Congress." And it isn't laughter that gives the ring to his voice.



The explorer sees his name in tiny letters in an obscure footnote in the new atlas, and he forgets the fever and the poisoned arrows.

The flags dip, the drums roll, *slap-slap, slap-slap,* first on his right shoulder, then on his left, the aviator feels the sword of a Field Marshal of France.

Accolade! For heroes, for men of worth everywhere, there is always a mark of distinction. For stories of heroes, of daring men in dangerous places up and down the earth the mark is

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Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 91, No. 6 April 15, 1935 Twice a Month

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Strange slaughter spread over the African veldt. From the thornbush came the chatter of machine-guns, and beast of hide or horn, from elephant or hyena, crumpled before the onslaught. That was the problem of Kingi Bwana.

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Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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WARDENS OF THE BIG GAME

THE big elephant danced in his rage. He charged in thunderous short rushes, wheeled and thundered back. He flung his trunk high and screamed brazen blasts of fury. He stamped the dust to a yellow smoke-screen. He tore up tussocks of dry grass and thorn bush and lashed them to shreds against his own horny knees in a giant frenzy of destruction.

Two white men and two black stood frozen in their tracks and watched him. Nothing separated them but two hundred yards of open veldt scrub.

King, big-boned and lean frowned at the awesome spectacle through dust-rimmed eyes. With an adroit motion he juggled a stem of grass across to the other corner of his mouth and grunted:

"Plenty mad, isn't he?"

"Terrific." The district commissioner whispered. "I hope to heaven he doesn't wind us."

King nibbled his grass, tight-lipped.

A novelette by GORDON Mac CREAGH

"He may not wind us in this heavy air. But he'll sure as hell wind that native village we left dead behind us."

The district commissioner moved his head in slow inches, desperately careful to attract no attention to their precarious position, cautiously surveying the immediate landscape for its scanty trees.

A fleeting grin cracked the caked dust from around King's wide mouth.

"Elephant eyesight isn't that good," he said.

"I think," the commissioner hazarded, "we might make that mimosa tree in a mad altogether rush."

King flashed one quick eye at it.

"Easy," he agreed. "But the native village will still be right back of us. And this big boy is mad enough to be considerable catastrophe to the heathen."

"Terrific!" The commissioner murmured again. "I wonder what so infuriated him?"

The grin passed from King's face. Only the lean, brown hardness remained. Angry disgust was in his voice.

"I can see from right here what's made him mad. Wait till he swings around and I'll show you."

The commissioner hissed a sudden intake of breath. "By Jove, he's got it! Watch him! He'll be down on us. Good Lord!"

It was true. A wave of sultry air, pregnant with refuse, crept up behind them and rippled the grass tops away out toward the angry beast's orbit of rampage. Instantly it stood tense, its ears flared immensely forward, its trunk high in the upper stratum of odors above the dust.

"Good God!" the commissioner repeated. "Run for the tree!"

King swung his rifle sling from his shoulder. Quite coolly he looked down to his feet and shuffled his boot soles to see that he stood on no loose rubble. His eyes began to narrow down in cold alertness and he eased a cartridge from the magazine into the chamber of his big Jeffries .475.

One of the black men, a huge fellow, decked out with knee and elbow garters of monkey hair in all the superb nakedness of a Masai Elmoran, took a horn receptacle from the lobe of his ear, tapped snuff from it upon his great spear blade and sniffed it in a splendid gesture of confidence in his master.

The elephant was striding in enormous uncertainty, ears like fans, trunk stiff before it, questing the vagrant airs with massively vengeful purpose. Even at that distance its snorts of expelled air came like a steam exhaust.

The commissioner became suddenly official.

"Kingi Bwana, there's no need to shoot that elephant. We can still make the tree in safety."

King sighted for a moment along his barrel to gauge the sun glimmer on his sights. He lowered the weapon.

"Go ahead, if you want to," he said. "And better jump. 'Cause when he comes he'll make it in fifteen seconds flat."

"Mister King!" The commissioner was officially formal. "I forbid you. You deliberately refused an elephant license when we started out. If you unnecessarily shoot this beast I shall be compelled to fine you the government penalty of a hundred pounds."

King grinned, his eyes warily fixed upon the gray mountain of rage.

"I believe you damn tape-bound officials would do just that thing," he said cheerfully. "All the same I'm going to shoot it. For two reasons. One is that stinking native village behind us."

"Good God!" That realization broke through the commissioner's agitation. "The women will all be in their huts at this hour too. Shoot it from the tree then."

As before, the grin soured on King's face.

"You know damn well nobody can shoot a charging elephant from up in a tree. Not dead. Head on is the only possible shot. This poor beast has suffered enough already. That's the second reason. I'm not going to let it carry away a lot of useless lead."

The other black man, a Hottentot as small and wizened as the Masai was huge, clucked a quick warning.

"*Angalia, Bwana.* He has picked the scent. He is coming."

The gray mountain screamed its rage once more and charged down straight for the little group of puny humans. King shuffled his feet again and stood, his mouth and eyes thin, parallel lines.

Fifteen seconds! But to the commissioner they hammered in the agonizing rhythm of his slow, crawling pulse. Incredible man, this King, taking a blood-chilling chance like this. All on account of some inexplicable sentiment about that murderously charging beast having suffered something or other.

The thunder of its feet vibrated on the ground. An avalanche of hurtling flesh and billowing dust, it rushed enormously nearer. All ears and reaching

trunk and wicked little red eyes.

But the commissioner held his ground alongside of King.

"Shoot! For God's sake, why don't you shoot?" he heard a cracked voice reiterating; and vaguely he realized it was his own. And coolly King's voice:

"Fifty feet is plenty good."

The mountain loomed immensely above them. A scream like a locomotive warning blasted the air.

KING lifted his rifle to his shoulder, held it a second, and fired. Its roar cut the scream appallingly short. The elephant's fore legs stiffened to the full ton impact of the .475 bullet. The barrel feet plowed parallel deep furrows in the ground. Slowly, like huge brakes applied, they came to a stop. The gray bulk swayed, fell over on its side as a mountain falls.

Through the choking dust King was grinning tight-lipped at the commissioner. The commissioner was aware of his own voice again, high pitched and dry.

"Good God! Why didn't you shoot sooner? Lord, the thing was almost upon us! Is it out of sheer bravado that you do these things, Kingi Bwana?"

"Fifty feet," King repeated the rule. "There's a space no bigger than your open hand between the frontal bones to aim for."

He led the commissioner forward. "Look now." His voice was dark with anger. "See why he was so mad? Tearing around that way? He'd never have bothered us else. Poor brute."

At first the commissioner could notice nothing amiss. Then it came to him that the fallen beast had only one tusk. The other—where the other had been—was a mess of splintered ivory and a pulp of raw flesh.

"Good heavens! What a ghastly mess! How could a thing like that happen?" the commissioner wondered.

"It could happen," said King grimly, "only from a rifle bullet. From a bullet fired by a man who has skill enough and nerve enough to creep up close enough for a side head shot—and who could then be drunk enough to miss. So think that over. That's why I brought you all the way to this place when you said you wanted a big-game hunt. I wanted you to see what kind of thing was going on in the far ends of your district."

"But—but, dash it all, my dear fellow—" The district commissioner was bewildered—"how—who would be so lunatic as all that? Besides, no elephant licenses have been granted in this district. This is all under strict conservation."

King laughed harshly.

"Sure, it's under conservation; marked off on your maps and listed so in your office by an ex-Tommy clerk. You'd fine me a hundred pounds if I shot an elephant without a special permit or in defense of human life. A good ruling. The game needs it, and every decent white man is all for it. A nice piece of legislation—but do you know how many, many loads of first-grade scrivelloes and prime hard Mohammed Ali the Banyan trader shipped out of here last season? All new ivory too; no old buried stuff from some back-jungle chief's hoard."

District commissioners of East Africa are lords paramount over territories as large as many an American State and control the destinies of several hundred scattered white men and a few million blacks. They represent the might and majesty of empire. But the D. C. took the thrust at official routine functioning meekly. His half mutterings were defensive.

"Huge district—not very accessible outpost—some confusion since Patterson's death. And the new game warden was—"

King's incisive interruption shocked him out of his excuses for the unwieldiness of imperial administration.

"And what did Patterson die of? What did your office record say about that? Dysentery, they wrote it down, I suppose. And I'll bet they commented in a neat, round hand, 'inaccessibility to competent medical attention', and 'much to be regretted,' et cetera and what not."

King shoved his hands deep into his breeches pockets and stood wide-legged, frowning moodily into the far heat haze. His voice darkened with his face.

"Well, maybe it was. Dysentery is easy enough to get, God knows. Only that Patterson knew as much about dysentery as most of the medicos around here; knew it at first hand, like I do. And in the 'confusion' after his dying, two tons of ivory went out of here."

"Good God!" The D.C. stared at him, wide-eyed. "What frightful thing are you hinting at, Kingi Bwana? What do you know about Patterson's death? If any crime has been covered up you must—"

King flared out at him.

"Aa-ah! I'm not one of your damned policemen. None of all this is any of my business. I'm not even one of your people. Just a 'bally Yankee safari conductor', as more than one of your snooty colonists has tried to rub it in on me. I don't know a durn thing about it. I've never seen any of the crowd running this racket; they're too smart. I know only what you white rulers of the land laugh at—native talk, gossip around my camp-fires, chatter that comes to me just because I'm not one of you, because I don't high-hat my men. I've shown you what's going on. Now sic your new game-warden onto it."

The D.C's face clouded to match King's.

"Ah, the new game-warden—Young Ponsonby." He shook his head helplessly. "I wasn't at all keen on his appointment. But his people are very influential at home. A younger son, you know, something of a scapegrace. So they shipped him out; and—I'm afraid he has never known what a real job means."

He shook his head again over the difficulties and entanglements of official expediency.

"Well—" King had no trace of sympathy with anything official—"that's your hard luck—and his. Or maybe it's all yours. Anyway, he isn't camping out along the lone water-holes, running his chance of getting 'dysentery'. He's playing polo at his headquarters station and dancing attendance on your civil surgeon's newly imported flapper niece. Aa-ah, blaa! What's the use?"

King blew his indignation from him windily through his high-bridged nose. Then he shrugged and grinned.

"That's more native gossip. You don't have to believe any of it. It's none of my affair. But I've shown you this much; and it's up to you to halloo your young scion of Milord Whoozis on to attending to the job his influential folks sent him out for. And you can tell him, as my best tip-off, that he's up against one wise and tough *hombre* that's the leader of this crowd. You don't know it yet, Commish Bwana, but I'm telling you, gang methods have arrived in your colony. This is a crowd that's out to scoop the cream of its filthy racket, and it's not only defenseless game they'll shoot on sight."

"Good Lord, Kingi Bwana, you talk in the most casual manner of the most desperate things! Why, if anything were to happen to young Ponsonby, relatives would rise upon their hind legs in the House of Lords and would demand an investigation into the whole process of government in this colony."

King remained callously unimpressed. For things to happen to foolish white men was their fate in Africa. Other white men would replace them.

"Probably be a good thing for us common herd in the colony if something would happen to him. Maybe you could

put in a warden who'd protect the game. You'll need a man who knows the country, who's as clever as a leopard, and who has half the nerve in all Africa to buck this crowd."

The district commissioner took King by the arm.

"Kingi Bwana," he told him with rueful conviction, "you are a masterless man and a blasphemer of sacrosanct things. You talk to me in a way that some of my subordinates would give a month's pay to hear. Take me back to camp, and keep on talking. I need some help. But easy with your mechanical robot legs; my knees are still limp from watching that terrific brute charge down on us."

King fell into a long stride that doubled the commissioner's labored ones through the stiff bunch grass.

"Sure, I'll help you. I'll tell you all I know. Two tons of ivory the Banyan trader smuggled out in his last load. At a pound sterling per pound, London market, that stacks up into money enough to attract some brains into the racket. There's plenty of your ex-soldier land-bounty settlers who have brains and don't figure to ever make that money out of honest farming in their lifetimes. And maybe your office clerks have notes on some of them who they think won't stick at anything. Sort 'em over. Stick your shiny new game-warden on to sleuthing them down."

"I'll need more help than that, Kingi."

"I can give you some more, at that. From camp-fire gossip I figure there's some half-dozen of them in the game; and from tracks that I've seen I can tell you that this particular guy who's shooting around here treads his right foot pigeon-toed. But you don't have to worry about him. No man can go fooling around elephants with a bottle on his hip. An elephant will get him all right. No guessing about that. You don't have to worry about any of them; they're just shooters—maybe man-killers too, if they're interfered with. But you must concentrate on the big shot who's organized them. He's the man to get before your warden gets 'dysentery'."

The D.C. stared at King as at a man who speaks of horrific things without turning a hair. Which, as a matter of fact was exactly so. Like all white hunters, the griefs of government officials were no affair of King's; they drew fat salaries to compensate them against the hazards of pioneer living that the lone hunter man had to accept as a part of the mere matter of keeping alive.

"You talk casually, my Kingi, of apprehending miscreants whom it would be dangerous to approach and against whom it would be extremely difficult to prove anything."

"You *make* it difficult," King snorted in his disgust. "You minions of the law and order want proof that'll stand in one of your courts. Baloney! These guys are rustlers pure and simple. You've got to send your man out to round 'em up and treat 'em like rustlers."

The D.C. walked half a mile in silence. Then he said:

"Kingi Bwana, you've told me the kind of man I need for this job. I know just one such man. I appoint you chief game-warden of this district with all the salary and emoluments that go with the position."

KING stopped dead in his long stride.

"Me?" he crowed his derision. "You want me to shove my face into this gang racket? And write reports and keep mileage records and fill two pages of your office file with a long story every time somebody takes a shot at me? No sir-ree! Not me! I'm a free man. I'm contracted to you for another two weeks, and then I'm my own boss, and I don't have to write letters to anybody's office clerks and have 'em write back and ask why I didn't mention how come I fired away

twenty-three cartridges 'stead of my allowance of twenty."

King spread his shoulders and breathed deeply, crinkling his nose to the sultry air.

"Nossir, Mister Commissioner. You can't appoint me any bloated government plutocrat with a dinky office in Malende. I'm a conductor of safari. 'To conduct Mr. G. Williamson and—or—his party,' my contract reads. . . . .'to lead him to hunting grounds as detailed in permit . . . . to protect him at all times from danger contingent to, or arising in connection with, sport, ... and so on and so on. I know your government contract form for white hunters by heart, if you don't. It's hard and tough enough on hunters; but you can't buy me into g o v e r n m e n t servitude."

The D. C. trudged another quarter-mile, immersed in thought. Then:

"Two more weeks is it?" He smiled wickedly. "During which you must conduct me wherever I want to go; and, 'should client be unable, for any reason, to conclude the term of his contract, balance of term must be paid, as agreed; but the hunter shall hold himself at the disposal of client'—or words to that effect. You see, my insurgent Kingi, I happen to have read some of our official forms. Therefore—" the smile became diabolic—"you will conduct me to my headquarters and leave me there. You will then repair to Malende and take the new game-warden out in my place. And you will exert every care to protect him, etc, etc."

All the cocksure independence vanished from King's demeanor. He looked almost frightened.

"Aw now, Commish Bwana," he pleaded. "I don't want to sheep-herd this milk-and-white dude of yours around the thorn scrub. Why, gosh durn it, he hasn't even had time to get sunburned yet; and, from what I hear, he's steadier holding a tea cup than a rifle, and his blood is so blue there can't be any room left for red."

The D.C. was inexorable—and serious.

"You, my Kingi, are a masterless man who will never understand, nor appreciate, the needs—nor *duties* of colonial administration. The youngster must be broken in."

"But I'm telling you, Commish, this is a mighty unhealthy district for game-wardens during the next couple months. You'll be sending your son of your best old families to get well slaughtered."

"You, my Kingi, will exercise every precaution to protect him at all times, et cetera, et cetera, as your contract reads—and to the best of your ability too, I think it says."

"The hell with the needs of your colonial government," growled King. "You're out to get me murdered, keeping my contract."

"Yes, Kingi Bwana. My office is full of complaints against you from angry officials who clamor that you flout all constituted authority. But you keep your agreements. Two weeks with you will be very good for young Ponsonby. I shall write him a confidential order by runner."

MALENDE, therefore, saw a disgruntled Kingi Bwana and his wizened little Hottentot servant looking for Ponsonby while the compact safari camp waited in charge of the great Masai a mile or so outside of the settlement.

Ponsonby, if not in his quarters, would likely be in the club. It has been said that where as many as three Englishmen are there will be a club. In these outlying district stations in East Africa, which have perhaps not more than half a dozen official residents, but are nevertheless centers of a far-flung white settler population, there is always a club; a frame building consisting at least of a billiard room, a mixed bridge room and maybe one or two others, but

principally of a wide veranda in which cold fizzy drinks can be served to tired white men in long cane chairs.

Ponsonby was there, a tall young man, impeccable in a tussore silk suit. He had a petulantly aristocratic face; not weak, but distinctly spoiled. King, dressed in a faded khaki shooting coat and shorts, efficient bush clothing, eyed him with distaste.

But Ponsonby was traditionally hospitable.

"Oh, Mister King, is it? What will you drink? I've been expecting you. The D.C. wrote me."

With a certain resentment he took a letter from his breast pocket and handed it to King. Couched in the farcial formality of colonial officialdom, it "had the honour to inform him" that he would consider himself under the orders of Mister King until further notice; and it "remained his obedient servant," the district commissioner.

King's thin grin came out. Good old D.C., making things easy that way. And, in a time of stress it seemed that he was not so afraid of influential relatives.

But King slowly tore the letter into little pieces and dropped them into an empty glass. He looked very steadily at Ponsonby.

"I don't work that way," he told him. "I don't like to take orders from any man; and I don't expect anybody else to like them. If a man can't work *with* me I'd just as soon not have him along."

Ponsonby's angry eyes lifted over his glass rim in a dawning surprise. This, coming from this hard-looking man, required time to assimilate. Embarrassed by a national incoherence under emotion, he mumbled vague sounds that resolved themselves into, "Umm, er, awf'ly decent. Ah—have a drink, what? And sit."

But King drove uncompromisingly to the point for which he had come.

"How soon d'you figure you could be ready to start?"

"Well, er—I was hoping to play against the Planters next week; but—"

"Yeh, I guessed somp'n like that. But how soon would you figure on getting down to your job?"

"Why, er—" Ponsonby's pink-and-white English complexion, untouched as yet by African sun, flushed. His petulant mouth bit down on his speech. "Damn-itall, since you put it that way, I'd say any time you're ready."

King shook his head.

"I'm ready now. But I'll say tomorrow at dawn for you."

He was not making it any too easy. But he explained: "The D.C. tells me you'll be needing to cover as much ground as you can. So I've cut out porters and I'm figuring to travel by light truck. Cramped, but we can make it all right in this dry season, and I'll be able to show you at least a couple of the water holes in two weeks' time. After that, if you're going to tackle the job, you'll have just six weeks to work.

"If you want to throw in with me you'll need your oldest clothes; and I'll have no room for an extra camp boy. You'll find mine more efficient in the bush anyhow. We'll not be picnicking."

White men in Africa become accustomed to their own servants. Some—the more sartorially inclined—grow to be quite helpless without the dark familiar spirit to whom they relegate their intimate personal needs, down even to the matter of pulling off their boots and stockings and finding their toothbrushes. And in the confusion of a safari camp—Good Lord!

It was unfortunate that at this strained moment another white man lurched up the shallow veranda steps. A broadly built, untidy looking man, scrubby-chinned; the very antithesis of Ponsonby's perfection. A hardy type of outlying settler. Dust, and a pistol strapped to his belt, showed that he had just come in from the bush, and his brusque shoving past King was evidence

that the road had been long and conducive of liquid stimulant.

A rough and uncouth denizen for a club that sheltered a Ponsonby. But in little district clubs where white men are few membership rules must of necessity be broad. Ponsonby had a hot answer ready for King. But his British trait of keeping his personal affairs strictly personal choked it down to a short, "How do," to the stranger.

But the settler man seemed to have an alcoholic chip on his shoulder. Ponsonby's cool dressiness, in contrast with his own dusty workaday costume, aroused a latent class resentment. He stared red-eyed at the young man.

"Ho!" he said, and there was a nasty edge of insinuation in his Cockney twang. "The nice new gaime-warden a-settin' cushy to 'is tea with nothin' ter do."

Ponsonby remained seated, aristocratically calm.

"Attending strictly to my own business, thank you."

"Ow indeed. It's many o' the likes o' us would wish we 'ad such a heasy business."

The man's rudeness was quite uncalled for. But King could understand the antagonism of a hard-working planter, or whatever the man might be, to the easy security of an official. He stood impartially aside. This was none of his business; and it was an unexpected opportunity to observe how this foppish young man would react to insult.

Kaffa, the little Hottentot, who had been squatting, blanket-swathed in the broiling sun, stood up and began to scratch himself with the sudden vehemence of an infested ape— with quite unnecessary vehemence. King knew that the cunning monkey's eyes missed nothing and he knew his habits well enough to understand that the little man wanted to attract attention to himself. He moved to the veranda rail to watch him.

The Hottentot postured and scratched grotesquely. Always down toward his right foot. His bright round eyes, instead of watching his own activities, flitted to his master's and then to the belligerent stranger.

King under lowered lids looked the man over. And then he got what he had missed in his absorption in the argument.

The man's right foot turned pigeon-toed.

King's eyelids flickered and went narrow. That track that he had seen around by the water-holes where the elephants drank had been pigeon-toed. Nothing very unusual in that; but that, too, had been the right foot. Still nothing very unusual. Any man who knew tracks knew that many people had that idiosyncrasy in one foot or the other.

Nothing very definite to go on—not by any means "evidence" of anything at all. But—

King watched the man. He still remained aloof. Coldly aloof. He was no nursemaid of pink-cheeked officials—not yet. The man was rough and powerfully built—maybe dangerous. If he should perhaps beat this game-warden so that he might not be able to travel with tomorrow's dawn it was still none of King's affair—might save him a great deal of bother.

But all his faculties were focused on the man, on his every action. Alcoholically quarrelsome — that would fit in with the unknown hunter. Unprovokedly belligerent against a youngster who, far from giving offense, had merely been polite—could it be for no other reason than that this was a game-warden, as had been Patterson, who died of —whatever it was?

So absorbed was King that he did not hear what the man said. But Ponsonby was slowly getting up. With nice care he set his glass down. Half turned from the man, he said in a politely conversational tone:

"You wouldn't want to repeat that, would you?"

Instantly the man did. A foolish word of little meaning; but one which the convention of the English public schools has ruled to be a fighting word.

Ponsonby walked up to the man, quite slowly, buttoned the lowest button of his silk jacket, and hit him squarely over the mouth.

Inexpertly, but with the well-bred heartiness of one going through a necessary ceremony, as much as to say:

"Now, come what may, we must fight."

The blow rocked the man back on his heels; more on account of its surprise than by its force. But it was sufficient to gash his lip.

It brought no ceremonious response from him; no gentlemanly squaring off for formal fisticuffs according to amateur rules. The likes of him had not been brought up in that school. Moreover he was just on the edge of being drunk, and in that condition he seemed to be a man of a demoniac temper.

WITH the first spurt of blood from his lip he screamed an incoherent noise and tugged at the pistol at his belt. Ponsonby stood paralyzed at so startling a reversal of everything proper.

But there was nothing new and unexpected in this sort of thing to King. He jumped like a great tawny cat, reaching for the man's pistol hand. His grip closed on it; and the maniac instantly turned, snarling, upon his interference.

He was burly and thick-muscled. But his own surprise was coming to him. He swung ferocious blows with his free left hand at King. The pistol, shoved high, fired through the veranda ceiling. The man, gibbering rage, pushed in breast to breast and tried to match his strength against King's to force the gun down. King let the man struggle, till, presently finding his opportunity, he dragged the imprisoned arm over his shoulder, slipping his hip under the other's body and heaving him cartwheeling over the low veranda rail. The gun remained in King's hand.

The man fell on his head in the dusty marigold bed that bordered the building front, where he rolled and sprawled ruinously.

Instantly in a gorilloid rush the Hottentot crouched over him.

"Do I slay him, Bwana?"

King shook his head. "We are in the presence of the *serkali* that rules such things by law; not in the bush."

The man struggled to his feet and wobbled round the angle of the house.

"A man," King commented after him "not hampered by any inhibitions. Looks like he fills the bill. But we can't prove a thing on him. Nor he isn't smart enough to be the big shot. Anyway I'm glad I know what he looks like."

He swung round to Ponsonby.

"What," he asked him bluntly, "are you going to do about him?"

Ponsonby faced King as though rebutting in advance an accusation.

"I could turn him over to the sergeant constable for attempted felonious assault with a deadly weapon. But I won't. This is my private affair."

A thin gleam of approval came into King's eyes. Slowly he began to nod.

"Maybe," he ruminated half aloud. "Maybe, dammitall, you have the makin's."

Of which Ponsonby could understand much less than nothing.

"So then," King continued. "Let's get back to what we were talking about. My guess is that you were in half a mind to tell me to go to hell. And to help you make it up I'll tell you that, if my next guess isn't away off, this club member of yours is only a sample of what your job means."

Ponsonby's brows went up in well-bred disgust. To affect nonchalance was his hereditary creed.

"If my blighted relatives insist that I must live in a land where my club fellows are like this, I suppose I shall have to bally well learn to save my life for myself. And really—looking at your methods—I'm sure I couldn't find a better teacher. So let's let it stand for dawn tomorrow—and er—thanks, old man."

"It's funny stuff," said King, "but sometimes it has the makin's."

"What is? What has?" asked Ponsonby, mystified and wholly serious.

"Blue blood," said King. "But you won't understand. Like your chief says, I'll never understand the duties of colonial administration—s o m e t h i n g mixed up with a holy thing you Britishers have, called the service of empire. But I'll take your drink now, and sit. There's a plenty of more important things for you to understand about this business—like, for instance, keeping alive during your next few weeks. Patterson was a good man; but they got him."

It was a modest little *safari* that King had arranged for the breaking in of dude Ponsonby. Almost meager—and purposely so. This was no pleasure trip for millionaire sports who bought with their lavish money all the luxury of tent boys and cook boys and personal boys and canned delicacies and a moving-picture man.

King had clients like that too. They came and they got their trophies—or King got them for them—and they went home and told their tales of hardship and danger. Good people; gold mines necessary to the existence of licensed white hunters.

But this was a serious business of finding out whether a man might be fit for the job of protecting the game. King was at no time a nursemaid for incompetents. If his own time and effort must go into the thing, make or break must be the result.

So the outfit consisted of a simple ton-and-a-half truck. Most of the space was devoted to five gallon drums of gasoline and to necessary spare parts and supplies. The big Masai and the Hottentot clung where they could on top of the pile. With them, aloof and very superior, huddled a Nariobi native who rated himself as an auto mechanic and considered therefore that he should do no other work. But the other two knew better than that.

Ponsonby rode on the driver's seat beside King. King, a stubby pipe stuck into the corner of his mouth, maneuvered the car in and out between the spiny mimosa trees and around — or through—the dongas, steep-sided gullies left by the fury of last season's rain. His eyes scouted far ahead and, with a certitude quite incomprehensible to Ponsonby, picked out a route that never caught him in a blind alley of impassable thorn.

With a quick motion of his lips, he shifted his pipe, as if it might have been a cigar, to the other side of his mouth so as to speak to Ponsonby on his left.

"Your chief stuck me with this job because I showed him something. I'm going to show you something worse."

"Yes? What is it?" Ponsonby gasped between spasms of jolting as the truck climbed stiff grass tussocks and slammed down into the dusty hollows.

"You'll see." King bit angrily on his pipe. "We'll set up camp presently and then we'll have to walk a while. That polo outfit your oldest clothes?"

"Oh, quite. That is to say, my oldest sports clothes."

King smiled his anticipation. They left the car in the shade of an acacia grove. The mechanic's function was to act as watchman and to see to it that there would be sufficient dry fire-wood collected by the time the others came back.

The four of them set out on foot. The Masai, magnificently naked, led. Low thorn bush rasped against his legs, leav-

ing dusty white scratches upon their rough hide. Then came King, in pigskin leggings and shorts, his own bare knees as horny as the Masai's. Behind him were Ponsonby and the Hottentot.

Fine dust swirled from the thorn scrub as the men's legs brushed through. It caked with the sweat that drenched their clothes. Down steep gully sides; along sandy bottoms where leopard tracks preceded them for aimless miles; up gravelly banks; more thorn scrub.

King's ears told him of Ponsonby's progress behind him. Not looking back, he remarked:

"Kinder tough on those shiny riding boots, isn't it?"

"Why, yes," Ponsonby panted. "But it's worse on my riding breeches."

"Uh-huh," grunted King. "Figured so."

Not till half a mile further did he look back. Ponsonby's shiny boots were furry with tiny nicks; the closely tailored breeches had shredded clear away; the knees were raw and bleeding.

"Holy gosh!" King surveyed the spectacle. "Hell, I didn't know those valuable things were that fragile. You should have yelped before this."

Ponsonby was grateful to stop. "I—er—well, the rest of you seemed to be getting along all right; and so—er, so I—"

King's grunted commendation was enigmatic to Ponsonby. "The blood comes redder'n I thought." From his frayed shooting-coat pocket he produced a pair of long strips of closely woven cloth. "I've seen this happen before," he said caustically, as expertly he wound them, puttee-wise, round Ponsonby's lacerated knees. "But durned if I've ever seen such frail and fancy pants. This'll slow you up some; but it's not far now."

A few minutes brought them to a litter of scattered bones; only the heavier ones intact, the rest—and amazingly thick ones at that—marred and cracked by the tremendous teeth of hyenas.

"ELEPHANT," said King shortly to Ponsonby's stare. "And worse than what I showed the D.C."

He pointed with his toe to a great flat plate of bone.

"Shoulder blade. D'you notice anything damnable about it?"

"Why, er—I suppose these are bullet holes."

"Yep." King's voice was throaty with anger. "And could you guess what kind of bullets would make a neat row of holes like that all in a line?"

"I should almost say—good God, you don't mean to tell me that was a machine-gun!"

"Right! You're damn right. And that shows you the filthy kind of crowd this is."

"Why, good Lord!" Ponsonby was genuinely shocked. "How foully unsportsmanlike! That's—By Jove, that's as bad as shooting a fox."

King flashed a look at him; but the man was staring in repugnance. King agreed with him dryly:

"Yeh, as bad as shooting a fox in your country. And the way I understand you view-halloo people look at it, that comes pretty near worse than shooting a man. Which it is, 'cause a man can shoot back. You've got the right idea, fella. Damned if I don't believe you've got the makin's."

He scowled moodily at the splintered bone.

"It takes guts and it takes skill to drop an elephant clean with a rifle. One of them, we know, has at least the guts. But the rest of the filthy gang cut loose with artillery. And—" he swung round to look squarely at Ponsonby—"it's a whole game-warden's job to stop 'em."

Ponsonby stared at him, pale and wide-eyed. He sucked in his lower lip and bit on it so that it went white. Then he nodded.

"If you'll help me."

King's grin broke slowly over his face.

"Well, I'm stuck with the chore for two weeks," he agreed. "Come on back to camp and I'll tell you what we're up against. I'm guessing a good deal; but here's how I lay it out."

With unsparing detail as they went along he outlined his theory.

"This gang, the way I figure it, aren't hunters, all but one of 'em. Not even farmers. Town riff-raff that survived the war and took their bonus in land grants—Colonial Empire that your government preached 'em. Well, they came out and went up against drought and locusts and tsetse fly, and they hadn't the experience nor the backbone to pull through."

"Yes. A lot of them came back, soured and sore, and went Red."

"Some of 'em stayed. Back-alley rats; misfits in the big open country. Then the game conservation department down at Nairobi decreed a rest period for this district. Complete prohibition except for certain over-stocked species. A durn good thing. Every decent white man conformed. Till now some smart gent has figured there's a quick clean-up in ivory and hides. He organized a gang, and they've already got some. But the next few weeks will be the cream."

"Why more than any other time?"

King scowled across the heat haze as at a mirage picture that curled his nostrils in disgust.

"The tail-end of the dry season. The smaller water-holes are drying up. Game will be concentrating around those that are left—places like Unduli Pan and M a g i m a g i. Everything—elephants, rhino, antelope, everything there is in Africa all in one place; all thirsty; and, even when they're scared away, all bound to come back. With the first break of the rains, they'll scatter all over the landscape; but until then, the last six weeks, they're like tied hand and foot. That isn't hunting any more; it's murder. These swine aren't hunters. But the war taught 'em how to use a machine-gun. They'll clean the district like a stock-yard. Ivory, horns, hide, anything that has a commercial value."

King's picture was starkly repellent. The prospect of his share of the "duties of colonial administration" opened up more grimly before Ponsonby with each new thing that he learned about it. Still the tradition of his caste to make light of danger was uppermost. He contrived a wry smile.

"By Jove, that reminds me I've never been so dead for a drink. And d'you know, my people pulled strings and sent me out to this job because they said I was doing no good at home, and here would be nothing to do and plenty of sport."

King added the last inexorable detail.

"And there's nothing to stop 'em—except the game-warden."

Ponsonby walked on in silence." And Kingi Bwana," he amended.

King's answering grin was twisted.

"Yeh—for two weeks. And a sweet chore I'm stuck with. Poor old Patterson is proof that this crowd isn't sticking over anything in their way. And there's a good half-dozen of 'em; maybe more." He strode on, scowling. "There's just one hope we've got. These are town crooks; cunning rats, but they don't know the bush. It'll be bush lore against machine-guns."

Ponsonby's question was a despairing cry for help.

"If you feel the way you do about the game why can't you stay for more than two weeks? The D.C. would pay—"

King's hand suddenly on his shoulder stopped him. The camp was in view, the truck showed through the trees, all quiet and undisturbed. But King was peering at it with alert suspicion. With silent pressure he guided Ponsonby behind a tree.

THE game-warden, with his new sense of the danger that surrounded his office, tingled to a sense of caution. His voice dropped to a whisper.

"What is it?"

"Funny," King muttered. "Something queer there."

"What is? I don't see anything."

"Look just to the left of the truck. That tall bird."

"That stork sort of a thing? What is funny about it?"

"That's a greater bustard. The best eating on the plains; but much too wily a bird to be so near the camp if there was anybody around. Camp is plumb deserted."

Ponsonby felt his pulse begin to pound.

"You think— What do you think might be the matter?"

King's deft shrug threw his rifle-sling from his shoulder as the weapon smacked neatly into his hands.

"Durned if I know. But I'm taking no chances in this game. You stay right here."

King's quick look called the great Masai and the Hottentot to follow him.

"We're going look see."

"But my dear chap. I can't hide away like this. This is my business and it's my duty to—"

"Duty be damned," King hissed at him, his eyes never off the distant camp. "You stay right here. My contract calls for me to protect you to the best of my ability and so on and thus next. It's your people made the rules. My reputation as a *safari* conductor can't afford to take risks."

Yet he was already on his cautious way forward, skirmishing from tree to grass tussock to further thorn shrub, the natives like dark shadows behind him. Abruptly they disappeared from view. Ponsonby was left enormously alone with the hot silence of the empty African veldt. A silence empty of all visible, yet full of things that moved, prowled, slunk, unseen.

Danger? Tragedy? Death? What? A silence that dragged on to slow aeons.

Then the far snap of a pistol shot. Ponsonby's tense nerves twanged like taut wire. He looked for an instant eruption of struggling figures, of more shots. But only the bird leaped convulsively high in the air with a flutter of wide wings. Then King's tall form moved beyond the car; shouts rang out. He saw the flash of the Masai's spear as he moved through a patch of sun.

Then presently a dark form came scurrying back through the bushes—the mechanic. All the forms merged into a group. The mechanic gesticulated excitedly.

When Ponsonby panted up King was tersely questioning the boy. He gibbered and gesticulated with white rolling eyes and outthrust liver-red lips.

"What did this white man look like? What did he say?"

"He was tall. Yet Bwana, not so tall. He was bearded. That is to say, bearded not more than four of five days. He was dressed like—like a white man. He demanded drink. He beat me near to death, Bwana. But I escaped and fled into the bush."

That was the only thing that was definite. A white man had come in a quarrelsome mood and, African-like, the boy had bolted into the bush.

King shrugged his helplessness. "There's Africa for you. Dumb, blind, panicky. Damnation! I wish it had been one of my own men. Kaffa would have outwitted him and Barounggo would have speared him."

"What—who do you think he was? What did he come for—and not stay?"

King barked a short laugh. "This is Africa. No white man's movements are secret. Particularly not yours just now—and mine. Still, if one of them had the nerve to come, why wouldn't he stay to make his play? A friendly

visitor would have stayed." His eyes flickered suspiciously into the surrounding bush. "That crowd wouldn't hesitate to bushwhack us."

The Hottentot who had been scurrying around, questing like a dog, yelped his sudden find.

"Ha, Kaffa. Good apeling. What hast thou?" King hurried to him.

The little man was squatting over a patch of ground free of grass. With a skinny finger he pointed. Among the boot tracks in the dust were two within striding distance of each other—and one of them turned pigeon-toed!

King swore softly. On hands and knees he groveled with the Hottentot to find confirmatory trail. He went back to Ponsonby whistling t u n e l e s s l y through his teeth, his eyes very narrow and hard.

"Trailed." He gave him the cold news. "Trailed from the moment we left Malende." And with grim meaning: "The game-warden is out on the job and the gang is losing no time. Still, what the devil was this play?"

The color ebbed from Ponsonby's heated face, but he said: "Quite complimentary, I'd call so much attention, what?"

"Your friend," King told him. "Pigeon Toe. He demanded drink. That about identifies him—though, damnitall, any man would do that after a hike through the bush."

That suggestion reminded Ponsonby of his own need that the excitement had temporarily driven from him. He reached to the rickety camp table upon which stood a sparklet syphon and a half full bottle of whisky.

"Aa-ah!" The ejaculation rasped from King's throat and he snatched the bottle. "Perhaps that's the answer."

Ponsonby raised his eyebrows. "What is? Dash it all, I never met anybody so full of surprises."

"You'll get your plenty," said King "before you get home—if you ever do. What I just said: to reach for a drink would be the first thing any man would do, coming in from a hike; and he wouldn't stop to investigate much." His own narrow eyes bored cold gray into Ponsonby's wide blue ones. "Maybe that's how Game Warden Patterson got his—dysentery."

"Good God!" This came close enough to home at last to jolt the nonchalance out of Ponsonby. His affectation of languid interest was charged with white-eyed horror. "Good God, you don't mean—"

King nodded slowly.

"Patterson never got whatever it was that he died of by accident. He knew too much about Africa to take chances with impure water or anything like that. I guess that was his whole trouble. He was on the job and he knew too much."

GENERATIONS of tradition ebbed back out of Ponsonby's past to steady him. He swallowed a few times and licked dry lips; but his voice, when it came was natural—not drawlingly humorous, but sober.

"That's a frightful suspicion to have against any man. They may be poaching and all that—beastly unsportsmanlike and so on. But this—Good Lord, this would be murder."

"Maybe, brother, maybe. But I'm taking no chances. I never take chances." King up-ended the bottle and let the liquor gurgle onto the thirsty ground.

"Don't do that!" Ponsonby reached for the bottle; but too late. "Ah, pshaw! Now we'll have no evidence. We may know who the man is—might even identify him with the tracks, with the native boy's identification in a court. But we have no proof of anything on which to convict him."

"Yeah?" King rasped his impatience. "You'd want to drag a man like that into a court, would you? Just like your chief. You people are so bred to law

and order that you can't understand you're up against a crowd that'll stop at nothing. You're not safe in your tight little island now. You're in big country; hard country; and let me tell you there's some hard men in the outlying corners of it."

Ponsonby was willing to concede much to this man who seemed to know so exactly what he was about. But his tradition of lawfulness was as difficult to disturb as any other. He mumbled something to that effect.

"Listen." King seated himself on a camp chair and filled his pipe to help him reason patiently with tradition. "This is none of my affair. I'm in it for two weeks, and then there'll be nobody gladder than me to get out in a hurry. But if you want to live you've got to get this straight."

He flipped a grub-box key to the Hottentot and ordered him to bring a fresh bottle of whisky with an unbroken seal and some of the bottled soda that he carried against the contingency of finding a water-hole too befouled by animals for use. He lit his pipe and growled through the smoke.

"Listen. Take this much flat, without argument. Like I told the D.C., gang methods have arrived in your colony. Town rats with machine-guns organized to a racket for some quick money. The only one who seems to know the bush is this Pigeon Toe; for which you be good and mighty thankful."

Ponsonby was all agreement.

"Granted, my dear chap. I believe everything you say. So I must—we must arrest them and—"

"*We* must?" King blew derisive smoke. "You can't drag me into any official heroics. Listen some more. In my country we used to try to arrest our gangsters and bring them to the law. Our officers were shot down in their scores by gunmen whom they didn't know but knew them by their uniforms—just like this crowd whom we don't know, knows you—and me, durn it. Our gangs had a swell time; they came to pretty near run the country. You Europeans jeered at us about it. But we've learned. We're figuring at last our officers are more valuable than our gangsters, and at last we're giving 'em a free hand to take no chances. So we're getting the gangs. You want to arrest these rats and haul

'em to a law court. O.K., that's maybe your 'duty of colonial administration'. Me, I figure I'm more valuable than an ivory poacher. That's one reason why I'm getting out of this mess when my two weeks are up. So if you want to quit and go home, now that you know what it's all about, that'll release my contract; and nobody gladder."

The exposition of the situation was cold-blooded and unsparing. King watched Ponsonby shrewdly. Make or break. King's interest was in a warden competent to guard the game. Either this youngster would come through or break.

Ponsonby's eyes were hunted. They looked at King—not at the man; at the picture of his words; a hopeless picture of lone-handed inexperience against he could not quite visualize what, but something ruthless. He fingered his rifle nervously. His eyes wandered over the landscape, the vast trackless bush, miles upon miles of thorny shrubs—under any one of which a man's bones might lie and dessicate and never be found. His eyes came back to King. His lip was white under his teeth. His voice dry.

"Perhaps we—we would get something done before your two weeks are up."

King's slow smile crept up behind his eyes and slowly he nodded.

"Perhaps *we* could," he agreed this time. "If you don't plumb throw away your life on fool chances. And here's something that'll maybe help your conscience."

He pointed with his toe. His eyes that had followed Ponsonby's roving gaze had focused themselves warily on a far point in the bush. Narrow again; and alert as a leopard's, they watched something. His toe pointed to the smudge of moisture where he had emptied the bottle. An insect lay on its back amongst the sparse grass roots at its edge. Specks that were ants remained unwontedly still. Eyes less observant than King's would never have noticed them.

"Would you consider that sound evidence that somebody had been interested in doping the new game-warden's drink?"

Ponsonby stared, white-faced, as what had been suspicion became cold certainty.

"And if a man came skulking around the bush after that, would you consider it lawful evidence that he was the man, come to see how it worked?"

Ponsonby nodded, puzzled. "Any court would consider it highly circumstantial."

"And if he had a gun would you count it a good bet that he had no inhibitions about finishing what he started?" King's hand was stealing round behind his chair to where his rifle leaned.

"Why yes, I certainly—. King, what is this you're driving at?"

King rose softly to his feet and edged behind a tree, his rifle ready.

"Then you better take cover; 'cause there's somebody who fills the bill snooping round back of that tambuki grass belt."

PONSONBY found himself behind a tree—not through any conscious volition of his own. His pulse pounded in his head. The stark conditions of his job were piling home on him with a vengeance. He knew all the desperate emotions of the hunted.

"Have we permission, *bwana*?" The Masai, lying flat on the ground with the other natives below the bush screen, rolled fierce, eager eyes to his master.

King nodded. The Masai laughed softly and, bending low, ducked into the scrub. In a moment his great form was lost to view. Not a motion of bush tops showed his passage.

The Hottentot threw off his blanket. Beneath it was revealed his extraordinary shape, as naked and as muscular as

a chimpanzee, armed with an immense Somali knife. He scuttled off in another direction, spreading out to get the marauder between them.

They were amazing to Ponsonby, these men, pitting their steel and sheer jungle craft against a firearm that lurked cautiously somewhere out in that grass belt.

He stared out at it from behind his tree with a tight prickly feeling of tragedy hanging imminent and inevitable. Whichever way it went, somebody would die. He had never seen violent death before.

The distant grass moved. Cautiously a rifle barrel emerged; then a head and shoulder. Tragedy was unfolding itself before his fascinated gaze. Which of those stalking men would it pick? He wanted to yell a warning.

And then his heart came up into his mouth. The rifle was pointing, not at some unseen thing in the bush, but in his own direction. Good God, at himself!

The primal instinct of self-preservation was older than any tradition of lawful process. He threw up his rifle and fired. Out in the tall grass a khaki-clad arm flung into view. The rifle flew from it. Both disappeared. A thin yellow haze of dust floated up.

Ponsonby's rifle remained at his shoulder, stiff and rigid. He stared out at the slowly settling dust, hypnotized by the suddenness of what he had done.

King's voice broke through the dizziness that buzzed in his head.

"Damned if he hasn't got the good makin's." Like a faraway picture, out of focus, there was King walking toward him.

"You've been learning somewhere or other to shoot off a rifle, feller."

"Why yes, I, er—I've done some—Have I killed him, d'you think?"

King was radiating good will. "If you haven't, the Masai will—unless Kaffa rounds him up first. But I think you've got one dumb bushwhacker out of the gang. Let's go see. But careful; he may be smart enough to play possum; though, by his clumsiness, I doubt it."

They found both the natives squatting over a huddled shape in a faded khaki uniform.

"It is not the crooked-footed one," the Hottentot announced. "But his gun is of the best kind and he had nine cartridges and a hunting-knife, not so good; but some good tobacco, and—"

King cut short the itemized list. "Yeh, I guessed it wouldn't be Pigeon Toe. He'd be too smart to be got so easy. This is some dumb gorilla who didn't know so much about the bush; just mean enough to be a killer. It's our luck the rest are like him. It's Pigeon Toe that's really dangerous; though even he isn't the big shot."

He turned to his two henchmen.

"Take up the trail and read the story of it swiftly before dark." To Ponsonby he said: "If we don't have to up and run for it, we'll let our good mechanic bury this. If we do have to, the hyenas will attend to the evidence of your lawlessness as efficiently as they did to Patterson."

Ponsonby stared at him. He was constantly finding cause to stare at King.

"You wouldn't run away from them?"

"If some half a dozen more like this gunman would be around somewhere? Would I durn well not! I've got no duty of administering your colony. I'm guiding you through the hoops; and I've never had a client killed on me yet."

He led the silent Ponsonby back to the camp. His heart was warming to this youngster whose aristocratic relatives thought he was coming to no good at home.

"Don't pull such a long face about it," he told him. "That was a nice piece of shooting you did there; fast and clean. That leaves one less gunman to get."

Ponsonby reverted to his despairing cry of a while earlier.

"Two weeks is a desperately short time. I'll be lost like a babe in the woods when you go. Dash it all, why can't you carry on if you're so keen about saving the game?"

King was more disposed to explanation of his actions than he had been.

"I told you one reason; I'm not hiring out as a policeman to buck this mob according to your law-book of rules. I'm too plain scared of them."

"Don't spoof." Ponsonby said. "This is serious."

"Well, I am too." King insisted doggedly. "But there's another reason. I'm tied up. Contracted to take Major Devanter of Malende on *safari* as soon as I'm through with this D.C. deal."

"I might have supposed you jolly well would be," said Ponsonby miserably. "I've heard it said that Kingi Bwana is a valuable man. But I didn't know that this Major Devanter was a sportsman."

In the emphasis upon the title there was a subtle censure of those ex wartime officers who clung to their rank in civil life.

"He isn't," said King. "He's a rank tyro. But it seems he's wanted to for a long time; and he contracted me early this spring. I'd have preferred to take him some other time; but no other time would suit him."

"Con-demnit! *Must* he have you? He's an old-timer here. He ought to bally well know you wouldn't let him go round shooting the water-holes at this season."

"Guess perhaps he does know. But he doesn't want to shoot here. He wants to go way out Tadyeni way after sable antelope. A damnfool trip I think; but I can't let him down." King grinned mirthlessly. "It's one of your good governmental regulations that a white hunter breaking contract can have his license revoked and can be 'fined or otherwise disciplined at the discretion of the local administrative officer'. That would be you."

"He might release you." Ponsonby did not sound very hopeful.

"I can't ask him. He's made all his preparations months ahead, fixed his business for a holiday, got his licenses, bought outfit and all. That's the reason for your breach of contract ruling. Maybe you could persuade him—or maybe the D.C.

Ponsonby in turn grinned without mirth. Here was this King man, despite his stout insistence of not letting himself be dragged into an official conflict, actually suggesting possible ways and means.

"I wonder," he said. "Maybe the D.C. could. This beastly thing seems to be of sufficient importance for any decent white man to forego even a long-planned trip."

"Wire the D.C.," King decided quickly. "Send a runner with the message to Lembu. That's the nearest line. If he can't twist the sacred regulations to get around Devanter, you'll just have to bow to 'em humble and buck the racket on your own."

Ponsonby looked at King with the dull hopelessness of one upon whom judgment has been passed and whose hope of reprieve is slight. But he made his voice say:

"Be a jolly little party, I expect, while it lasts."

"That," King nodded sententiously, "is the compensation you must pay for the privilege of belonging in a great empire and having duties to impose the white man's peace upon the empty back bush. The gods of Africa don't make it easy for the white man. But I've managed to last. Keep your nerve, and maybe you will too. But you'll have to have help. You can apply to headquarters to have some constabulary assigned; and by the time the six weeks' slaughter is over the order will maybe go through. I'll have Barounggo round

up some men for you—not servants; fighting men. Ha! Here come the two of 'em now. I bet you Kaffa has all the news like it'd been written in a picture book."

THE Hottentot screwed up his face and shut his eyes tight. In a singing monotone he began to recite the story, actually as though repeating the pictured word from memory.

"Bwana, there were two men, the crooked foot who came first to the camp and put the *muavi* root juice into the whisky bottle—"

"What's *muavi?* How does he know?"

"Sh-sh!" King hushed Ponsonby. "You mustn't break the reel of his moving picture."

"They came, Bwana, in a *moto* wagon with rubber wheels like Bwana's, but much lighter. Crooked Foot, having put the poison root in the drink, went back to the *moto* wagon and stood talking with that other one who was a fool. Then that other one took his gun and came back alone, as Bwana knows. But the crooked foot was too wise to come —for this other fool, the mechanic, has admitted that he told him this was the camp of the Bwana Kingi.

"So then the crooked foot, hearing the shot, came a little distance to learn what might be. But he feared to come close. At a little distance he stood in doubt for many minutes, resting his gun on the ground. Then fear overtook him and he went back to the *moto* wagon, running, and drove away; fast and far; for we followed a ways and came not up with him. That is all the story, Bwana."

"Hmh!" King grunted. "Just about as I figured him. Clever as a devil. But lacking just the guts to be an out and out gunman. We'll take after him in the morning with the car. If we have luck he may lead us to the gang's hangout; and then, with some good spear men, bush fighters— But that brings us right back to your own crew. What sort of people have you available?"

"Outside of the office staff, who seem to be queer sort of babu blighters, I believe there are some six or seven native *walinzi* game-keeper johnnies whose real function is to watch out for petty native poaching and who bring in reports. But to tell you the truth, I—" Ponsonby reddened with an embarrassment that he had never known before—"I don't really know an awful lot about the thing."

"Fire them," said King. "I'll get you some fighters."

"But my dear fellow—" This much Ponsonby knew, as did every government employe from the moment of his arrival—"They are government servants, duly approved and appointed under the civil service regulations. They can't be dismissed without proper cause, charges drawn up and substantiated. They can put up a terrific howl; appeal right up to the governor of the colony, and what not."

"Fire 'em." King snapped. "The hell with regulations. Let 'em howl. Get your job done, and point to that while the clerks haggle over red tape."

Ponsonby was inspired to rebellion—he who would not conform to the straitly ruled conventions at home. King's impatience with governmental maneuverings was damningly logical.

"All right, dammit!" he said, "I will. I'll take on your men and let the rest howl at the governor's very gates."

King beamed upon him. An apt pupil. Distinctly a lad with the makin's. "Good for you. I'll have Barounggo pick up some of his own Elmorani, lion slayers." He called the big Masai to him.

"Listen well, Barounggo," he told him. "There is need to exercise thy little wit besides thy brawn. We must select quietly some eight or ten *askaris,* fighting men who are more than fools; for they must pretend to be *walinzi,* servants of the *serkali,* with no loud brag-

ging and shaking of spears. Their pretence I shall judge when I see them. Their valor I leave to thy choosing."

The Masai swelled his great chest. "Bwana," he promised, "Myself I will put them to the test; and they that I shall bring—those who survive—will be warriors."

"Good. Tomorrow, as we travel, circulate amongst the villages."

King found time at last to fish out his pipe and blow luxurious smoke into the still evening air. He cupped his hands behind his head and grinned in review a good day's work well done.

"If we have any real luck tomorrow," he told Ponsonby, "the trail may lead us to the Big Shot who's organized the mob. He's low and smart enough to keep out of the shooting. If we can bring him in as clean as you got that bushwacking thug the rest'll be like running down jackals."

It seemed to Ponsonby that, for a man who consistently refused to embroil himself with this gang, King was taking an extraordinary amount of trouble. But he was learning to understand that this Kingi Bwana of the African bush country was a man quite extraordinarily different from the "set" that he knew. Somehow, he had never altogether admired that set; never whole-heartedly conformed to their narrow, caste-bound conventions. So they, outraged, had shipped him out to the colonies. Things were different in the colonies. Men were different—some of them. White men.

The morrow, however, brought one of the baffling disappointments of Africa. Pigeon Toe's car tracks wound through the tortuous scrub toward open plain country.

"Heading toward Magimagi," said King. "Likely they're operating around that water-hole."

The plain unrolled itself endlessly westward. In the shimmery distances low clouds of dust hung. King frowned at them.

"Herds of various beasts moving toward the water. Damnation!"

"But we may be lucky," hazarded Ponsonby.

"Not today," King growled. "That's wildebeeste ahead of us. He'll have been smart enough to get ahead of them."

The queer-looking creatures stretched across the whole front, thousands of them, straggled out in an endless panorama of slow motion, feeding as they went. Their grunting barks merged into a dull drumming of sound. King drove his truck among them. The nearest barked hoarsely and stampeded madly for a few hundred yards; then stood and stared in bovine stupidity.

"The luck is theirs that they're just lion fodder," said King. "Worth nothing. Else imagine what a machine-gun would do amongst 'em. And it's they, poor dumb brutes, that save him."

Then Ponsonby understood. The car tracks that they followed came to the edge of the line of march; and there disappeared—trampled hopelessly into the dust by the myriad shuffling hoofs.

King spat in thoughtful disgust.

"Pah! As safe as covering his trail in water. He may be twenty miles ahead of 'em still; or he may have cut out any place and let yet other herds cover him. That man knows his bush. Thank Pete the rest are just killers."

AND that day's disappointment stretched out into the next, and the next. With the disappearing of that trail all trails disappeared. All the wild things of the open plain were closing on the remaining water-holes. Their tracks covered each other and other tracks covered those.

King made the long trek to the Magimagi slough—circuitous on account of the deep, unbridged dongas that centered there. With the Hottentot he prowled the surrounding terrain, looking for signs of an encampment, listen-

ing for shooting. The Hottentot lifted his snub nose and sniffed the air for the faintest odor of lingering smoke. But only animal trails converged upon the pool.

They journeyed to other outlying water-holes. There they found the same peaceful conditions; virgin wilderness unsullied by sound or scent of man.

Ponsonby peered at scatterings of fresh bones.

"D'you think," a gruesome suspicion came to him, "they're using poison?"

King shook his head. "They'd be capable. But these are lion kills. Broken neck is a sure sign."

Three days to Unduli Pan, jungle country, spiny acacias, euphorbias, giant buttress-rooted figs; elephant country.

A wide belt around the pan, where sub-surface moisture lingered, was thick with scrub. Through the tangle, like dark tunnels, animal trails ran. A fringe of dense dead reed and a two hundred yard zone of cracked mud surrounded the slowly receding pool. A perfect open rifle range.

King hid the truck in a far-away bamboo grass and with Ponsonby cautiously sneaked up to the fringe to watch.

With the late afternoon drinking time the beasts came. Zebra first, as usual, impatient, kicking, biting, squealing; impala, leaping amazingly over each other, pretending they were not interested in the water; all the beeste and bok of Africa, cautious, on high-stepping feet, stampeding in wild flurries about nothing.

Later, with approaching dusk, came a general stampede in all directions; and then lithe, tawny forms, barely distinguishable against the baked brown clay.

Later again, with the beginning of darkness, there were vast shapes, incredibly silent, drifting like black shadows out of the shadow, the last of the light gleaming palely from their tusks.

The silence remained. Nothing disturbed them. No shattering fusilade. The African night closed sticky-warm and peaceful. Insects in solid masses drove the watchers from their hideout.

"Aren't we giddy lunatics," Ponsonby wanted to know, "to be going home through this jungle after dusk?"

"A leetle bit too early for lions to be hunting," King told him. "And they'll give plenty of warning, roaring the roof off of the landscape. That's part of their scheme—to scare the meat critters into blind stampede. You'll learn as we go."

And that was about the benefit that came out of their efforts. Ponsonby was learning Africa; learning how to travel, how to camp; to avoid the dangers of veldt and jungle. But to learn anything about the activities of the gang seemed to be impossible. And the anxious days were speeding alarmingly by.

"Durn funny," King growled. "They're hatching something particularly hellish. If we didn't know at first hand that a gun and poison squad was out for our hides, I'd swear this was all peaceful African back bush. The head that's running this is one smart and slimy *hombre.*"

Barounggo, the Masai began to bring in his recruits. Brawny, straight-looking spearmen. King explained to them that great honor was being shown them; they were selected by the *serkali,* the government, on account of their bravery. The young *bwana* was the duly appointed lord of all the game in all this wide district, and he had come many days' journey to look for just such men. He invented a solemn ceremony for Ponsonby to accept them into service.

Full of pride and zeal, they scoured a wide range of country, scouted every water-hole, hunting for news of evildoers who slaughtered the game. But they drew only a baffling blank.

"Could it be," Ponsonby hoped wildly, "that they've decided the business doesn't pay after all, and have given it up?"

"It pays all right," growled King. "You saw how much ivory came to just one pool in one night. Elephants often don't drink for three or four days at a stretch when they have far to go. There'll be other herds for that pool alone. Nossir, they're laying low for some reason."

"Perhaps they're afraid of us—you, I mean. And if they're as well informed as you think, they know you are booked up to go away to this Tadyeni place in a few days."

"And they figure then you'll fold up and quit?"

King put the theory in the form of a double question. He pretended to be scowling reflectively into the far heat haze; but from the thin corners of his eyes he was watching.

Ponsonby's face was set. Only the flush of his growing sunburn hid the whiteness that lay below. His jaw muscles swelled as he bit on his teeth and got up to stalk back and forth. Two weeks of the perplexing chase were nearly over; and the picture before him loomed dark and desperately alone. King noted the hard bulges in what was left of his breeches pockets and knew that the fists, thrust deep in, were convulsively balled.

"I—I—" Ponsonby swallowed. "Dash it all!" he cried in a choked voice, "I can't. I can't throw up the sponge and quit. Not now. You've shown me the beastly thing that's going on and—and—Damn it!" He flared petulantly against the merciless exigencies of Fate. "Your blasted gods of Africa do make it awf'ly hard for a man who'd like to think of himself as white!"

King got up and laid his hand on Ponsonby's shoulder. That was all the comfort he had to offer.

"Yes, they're hard gods," he rumbled ruminatively. "But somehow they sometimes stand by the white men who learn their book of rules. The rules are difficult to understand sometimes. But the first one of them is nerve. Stick to your nerve, feller— You've got it. And they may give us a break yet."

He thumped Ponsonby heavily on the back.

"Buck up, youngster. I believe in luck, and you can buy luck from the gods with your nerve. I've pulled out of worse holes. Hell, maybe the D.C. has squared Devanter already. We'll trek and go see."

But luck remained stubbornly aloof. From Lembu, Ponsonby wired to the D.C., a last forlorn hope, to inquire what progress might have been made about obtaining a release from Major Devanter. But after a delay—obviously for a further effort—the reply came.

With a set resignation in his face, Ponsonby handed the yellow paper to King.

"The man is obdurate. I can do no more. Officially I can exert no pressure."

King's hard fist crushed the paper into a tight ball and he flung it into a corner. The major fellow must be a stiff egoist as well as no sportsman. Enforced association with him over a protracted *safari* into a far and barren district would not be pleasant.

But worse than his own unpleasantness: this Ponsonby; he was a good lad. A ne'er-do-well at home? King snorted. Pah! A no-good, his hidebound old relatives at home might well think him to be; but he was the right material for the big, open, new country. All he required was showing. And he deserved showing—he had all the makin's.

King grunted his disgust:

"Hell, the D.C. might have forced his hand. The durn book of rules set up by your fussy colonial government is harder to understand than the African gods. But, damn, I don't give up yet. If nothing else breaks first, I'll rush this Devanter down to Tadyeni, get him his durned sable, and come back before you know it. You stall around for a while, worry the gang all you can, keep 'em moving; and maybe I'll be back in time to give you a hand with 'em."

Ponsonby was astoundedly overjoyed.

"Really, old man? Would you do that? Why, I thought you wanted nothing to do with this business that you didn't have to. By Jove, that'd be awf'ly decent."

"Aw!" King was embarrassed by the sudden surge of hope and confidence in Ponsonby's face. "As a hunter I do my share in shooting some of the dumb beasts; so I guess it's kinder up to me to do something to give the rest a fair break."

King's willingness to cooperate was sufficient to arouse Ponsonby to a flash of his studied nonchalance.

"Righto, old top. All I'll have to do is stay alive for a few weeks more."

Disgruntled and morose, King trekked back to Malende to present himself before this flamboyant Major whom he already despised for an unsportsmanlike boor.

Boor? Boer, he should rather say. By his accent he placed the man as a South-African and by his name as of old Dutch Africander stock.

MAJOR DEVANTER was a big, broad man, not unhandsome. A short, fair beard failed to completely hide a steely mouth and strong chin. Intelligent eyes looked keenly from under straight brows. A man who knew his mind and had the courage of his own opinions. He was all cordiality. Like many a colonial of uncertain social position, he tried to cover his accent with an affection of Oxford.

"Ha, Mr. King. Awf'ly glad you showed up. I was almost thinkin' I'd have to relinquish you to the commissioner. He was frightfully persistent. Appealed to my sportsmanship and so on. But dash it all, old man, I may be an arrant duffer in the field, but when a fellow's been makin' ready all summer, that's comin' it a bit thick, what?"

King eyed him sourly. "Did he tell you why?"

"Why he wanted you? Oh—er, yes. Yes, of course. He wanted you take young Ponsonby out to—er, sort of show him the ropes. Some trouble or other with poachers, he said."

"And you couldn't see it, I suppose?" said King crisply.

"Of course I couldn't quite see giving up my trip," the major harped upon his defense, "just because a young government man needed breaking in. So I did the next best thing. I popped over to invite him to come along with us. But it seems he was pottering around somewhere. So left him a note."

"Aa-ah!"

There it was at last. The luck that he had been expecting. His grin that had been absent for so long seamed King's face. He thought quickly. This wouldn't be so bad at all. Three white men together, and those quite excellent native spearmen that Barounggo had collected; they ought to be able to make a very successful little campaign against this slimy gang, machine-guns and all. And this Major Devanter. Not such a bad sort after all. He made out a very good case for himself.

"So I think we ought to have quite a decent trip, what?" The major voiced King's own thought. "That is to say if you won't find two of us—tenderfeet, you call us, isn't it?—Two such rank tyros too much of a strain on your patience for such a long trip as Tadyeni."

King's grin vanished. Tadyeni was ten days' journey away from the elephant country.

"Oh! You still want to go to the Tadyeni plain?"

"Positively, my dear fellow. There and nowhere else. I *must* have giant sable antelope; and you yourself told me that Tadyeni is the only place you know. You see—" the major was confidential—"it's this way. My fiancee's father is curator of mammals in the mu-

seum down at Capetown; and I've promised him a habitat group of giant sable. In fact—" the Major laughed a little sheepishly—"the old man's consent is in a way contingent upon my supplyin' him with the specimens. That's why I'm undertakin' a thing of this sort for which I have really no aptitude. Quite out of my line. I'm anything but a hunter. I'm strictly a business man."

"Aa-ah!" The exclamation rasped from King; and that was his only comment. This was not so good. The other, that flash of hope, had been too good to be true. Luck didn't come that easily, not for him. He had always been one of those Fate-bedogged men who had to go out and make his luck.

This time it looked as though Fate were deliberately conspiring against him. Everything was going too perfectly wrong—tied up months ago for just this season by a man who could make no other time; who was willing, it seemed, to go well over half-way to concede a favor to the D.C.; but was bound by very legitimate personal considerations to go to a far outlying place to get certain specimens that could be found nowhere closer.

That was more than just bad luck. That was a deliberate plot of malignant Fate. The sort of thing that stern gods of a hard land sent along to test a man down to the very fiber of him.

King swore savagely at having to take orders from Fate, even temporarily. Well, he would have to revert to the earlier plan. Hurry this major off, get him his specimens, and hurry back.

"Very well," he told him. "I'll be ready to start with tomorrow's dawn. I'll have all supplies and men. You'll need only your personal clothes and your rifle. See you at sun-up. I've got some final arrangements to attend to now."

There was a vast amount of detailed instruction and advice he would have to give Ponsonby before he left. That lad, with all the spirit in the world,—but with all his inexperience—was up against a deadly proposition. And he wouldn't shirk it either. That tradition of duty and service to empire and such was damned inconvenient stuff. But the boy had guts.

It was luck—a little luck—that most of the gang were inexperienced too; just gun men. Pigeon Toe was the danger. If he could but avoid that poison snake.

Those good spearmen. They knew their bush, of course. The most intelligent one of them, appointed as a leader, might—ha! He had it! The grin was fleetingly evident— He would leave Barounggo with Ponsonby as chief of the native force. If it came to fighting, there was a wise and cunning fighter. But the Masai— The grin faded—Dammit, the Masai would likely be reckless fool enough to charge his men against a machine-gun.

Truly was Ponsonby up against a deadly proposition. So that discussion with Ponsonby ran through the night and into the first light of dawn.

King got up without enthusiasm.

"So there you have it. All that I can give you. Take the Masai's advice in everything but barging into danger. I've got to go on my own chore. Good luck. I'll be seeing you before you know it."

Ponsonby was pale. He had absorbed all that he could of advice. But he had no illusions.

"I hope so," he said, not at all hopefully.

KING stalked, scowling and swearing softly, back to his camp. Damn this duty and service stuff. Why couldn't the boy just lay low until he should get back from Tadyeni? He'd show him, by God, how to round up this murderous mob. But what use? If the youngster didn't have just those things he couldn't be worth bothering with—wouldn't have the right makin's.

King roused the Hottentot and told

him to start up a fire for early coffee and a quick getaway. Then he went to see that the major would be up and ready. The sooner away, the sooner back.

But the getaway was not so soon. Fate—or maybe the dark gods of Africa that dealt out luck in recognition of courage—were indicating a small opening in their intricate game.

As King crossed the wide, wire-fenced Devanter compound to the whitewashed house in the center he saw something in the early light that stopped him as suddenly as though he had met a bullet.

A track on the ground clear-cut and sharp in the dew-laden dust. A track of a white man's boots—one of which turned pigeon-toed.

He stared at it as Robinson Crusoe must have done at the astounding track of a human foot. In the next second he recovered his poise and made a show of fumbling for his pipe. He filled it laboriously and lit it while his eyes from under the brim of his double *terai* had scouted the ground for more tracks and squinted sideways at the windows.

They seemed to be dark and empty. But King's every nerve was tense with caution. Caution and a dawning suspicion of he did not know what yet. He made a gesture of impatience, as though he had forgotten something, and he turned and went back to the bustling camp.

"Kaffa," he called the Hottentot to him. "All thy cunning is needed and all thy wit. Feet have been to that house in the night. Come with me—it will be as though to carry the white man's bags—and whilst I am within, read me the story of those feet."

He strode back whistling, hammered loudly on the door, entered to the major's hearty, "Come on in, old man," and found him dressed and ready.

"Hullo, old fellow. *Jambo sana.* The best of good mornings." The major was full of enthusiasm. "Auspicious morning for my first *safari,* what? I'm all packed and locked up for a six weeks' holiday, and under your efficient supervision I hope I'll not find it too hard. But you won't find me weakening. I'll stick it out, by Jove, until the rainy season drives us in."

King contrived a smile and the conventional reassurance that was the requirement of all tenderfeet. But, "Until the rains!" His mind raced around the thought. Was it coincidence; or could there be some reason for that insistence?"

The major busied himself with sundry final turnings of keys about the house. He made no objection to King's accompanying him through the various rooms. King had been half wondering whether there might be anybody else there. But everything was as it should be.

"There," said the major at last. "I fancy there's nothing left lying for even my native caretaker to steal. I sent my gear, rifles and everything, over to your camp last night; so we're all set. Just my duffel bag left! Did you bring a boy?"

King was glad for the chance to get away.

"I'll call him and take your stuff over and get it stowed."

"Right-o. I'll come over in five minutes."

The Hottentot shouldered the neatly packed duffel bag and stumped out, King at his heels.

"The feet," said Kaffa with positive assurance, "came to the house early in the night; for the dew is heavy on them. They went away again not two hours ago; for the dew is light upon their going. That is all the story of those feet. An innocent story. Yet, Bwana, it is in my belly that evil is here; for what dealing would such a man as Crooked Foot have for full six or seven hours with this white man who must go to Tadyeni which is the furthest of all places from here?"

The shrewd little man put his finger

on the very thought that whirled through King's mind.

Tadyeni, ten days away. These exact six weeks; no other time would suit. Contracted months ahead. An unassailable reason for not acceding to the D.C.'s request for release.

Too perfectly wrong, King had cursed all these concurrent mischances when he had blamed them upon a malignant Fate. But to his now racing suspicions they all fell together just too perfectly right. King had little conceit; but he knew very well that he was the only man in the district of whom ivory poachers would be afraid. He was the only white hunter who ranged in the back country, and his sentiments about sportsmanship and game conservation were well known. These six weeks in Tadyeni would take him beautifully away.

And then minor confirmatory circumstances.

The quick readiness to oblige the D.C. and invite Ponsonby along—get him out of the way too—nice. And this insistence of the major's about being such a neophyte. Why should he be?— He was an old-timer in the land. If he were such a tyro as he pretended, how should he know to pick upon sable antelope that were found no nearer than ten days' hard journey distant? How did he pack a duffel bag so well? How know to send his gear over the night before? How be ready and have the house all locked against his absence? An amateur would be floundering and sunk with last-minute details.

Clever, devilishly clever, all of it. The whole plan and the working of it so far had been clever. This major man looked to be clever enough.

Vile suspicions to harbor against a man. But Pigeon Toe! What secret business could a decent man have with so vile a person as Pigeon Toe throughout seven hours of a last night?

That inescapable fact was reason enough for any sort of suspicions.

The major came striding from his house. Tall, self-possessed, dressed in exactly the appropriate clothes for *safari*—King noted that to add to his list—keen-eyed; a man who knew what he wanted and usually got it.

"All ready!" he cried heartily. "And, as you Yankees say, r'arin' to go."

King made a quick decision.

"Ponsonby just sent a boy down to say he'd be glad to accept your invitation and come along."

The major beamed. "Splendid! That's topping! Did he send a note? Where's the boy?"

King had to think fast. "I chased him back to tell Ponsonby to hurry up, and I'd be along to show him how to back so he wouldn't keep us waiting all morning."

With that excuse he hurried away before the major should think of any other awkward questions.

PONSONBY was sitting exactly as King had left him. He had not moved. He sat gazing at the opposite wall as a man might in a death cell.

King burst in on him like a whirlwind.

"Quick, quick! Up! Get a move on! You're coming with us. Luck has busted wide open on us— At least, I think. What cars, trucks, anything, can you borrow or steal?"

"What—why—what on earth's happened?" Ponsonby was bewildered.

"You'll need transport for your crew —your spearmen. I have my light passenger flivver and the truck loaded to the limit with gear and two extra boys for the Devanter *safari*. We'll have to corral something for your army. I'll explain as we run."

Ponsonby's wits came to him quickly.

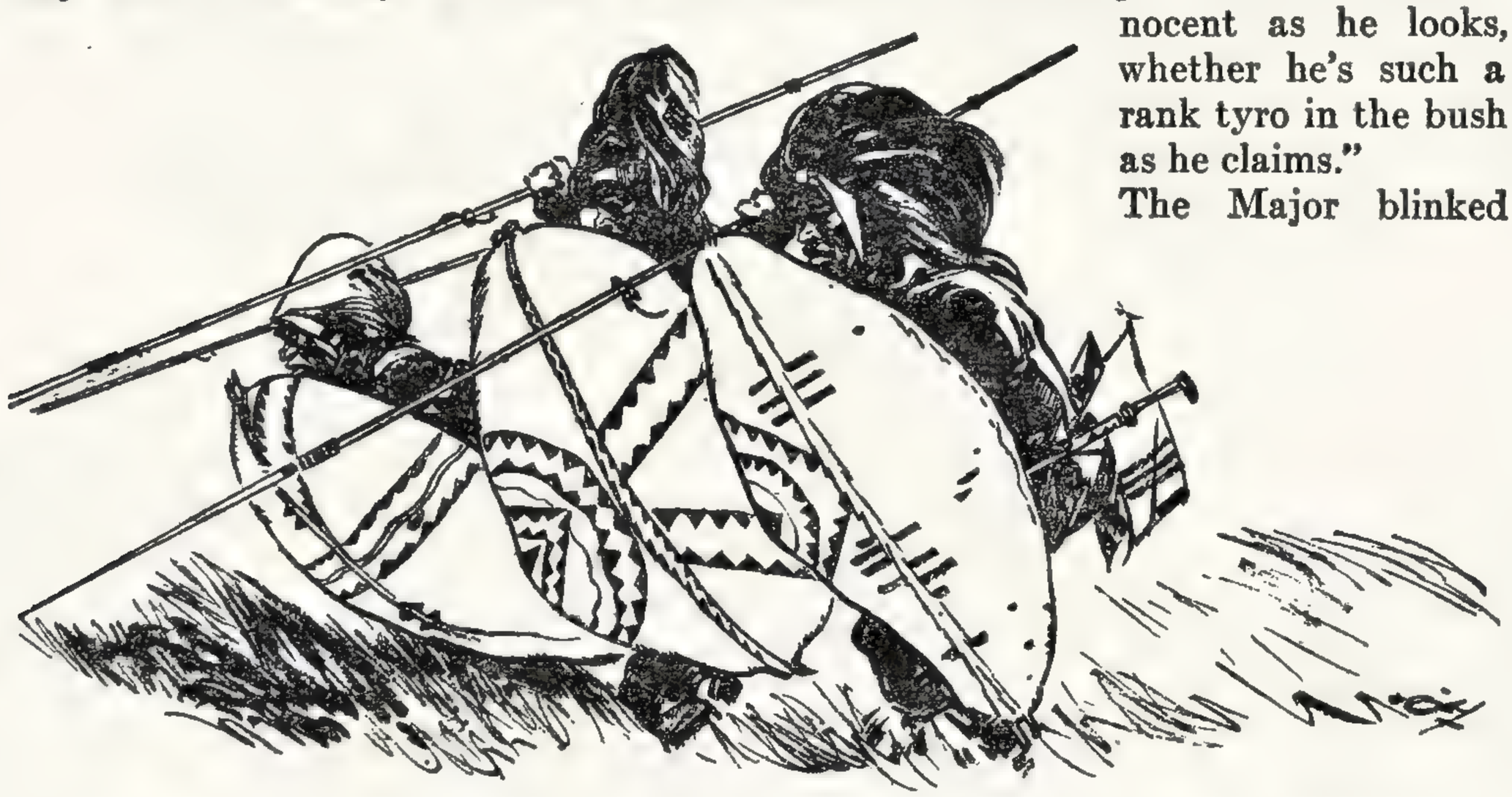
"There's a small government truck for the game department in Newton's hide go-down. But I don't know about petrol and—"

"Get it! Get everything you have!

We'll pile the men in and I'll rustle up an extra few sacks of mealie corn. Jump! Unless I'm a suspicious fool the gods have given us a sign."

Within the hour a startled native driver sat at the wheel of the truck and listened wonderingly to King's instructions to drive a wide circuit through the empty bush round Malende settlement.

King wedged himself with Ponsonby beside him and watched the ground as they went. Presently he found it. He



jumped down to examine the trail. He whooped.

"I'd have betted on it. Look. Tire tracks. Fresh—the dust hasn't blown over 'em yet. Somebody left Malende not two hours ago, heading westward."

"Who would be going westward?" Ponsonby wondered. "There's nothing there."

"Not a durn thing—" King was exultant—"except the water holes and elephant country. It adds up. By golly it adds up. My guess is that Pigeon Toe took his instructions and is off to join the gang in their hide-out. We'll be gone today—they think—and they'll have a clear field. Come on, let's get to the major; he'll be aching to start."

"I hope to heaven your suspicions are correct," said Ponsonby dubiously. "You —we've got nothing to go on but some tracks. We could prove nothing against him."

"Don't backslide." King warned him quickly. "Don't revert to your processes of lawful procedure. We're dealing with people who're smart enough to play rings around your clumsy law. The gods of Africa are giving us a lead. We'll go with this major man out into the open places of Africa and follow their play. I'll find out soon enough whether he's as innocent as he looks, whether he's such a rank tyro in the bush as he claims."

The Major blinked surprise at the throng that huddled in Ponsonby's truck. King, watching him like a hawk, thought that he noted a flash of uneasiness. But the major laughed bluff cordiality.

"Awf'ly glad you could come, old thing. But my word, you do travel with quite an escort, don't you?"

King lied glibly for Ponsonby.

"He's tenderfoot enough to feel that he needs three tent-boys. The rest are department men, going to be dropped off at Zimwe."

"Well, glad I don't have to feed 'em," said the Major. "If we're all ready, gentlemen, let's go."

The three white men rode in the passenger car. The two trucks lumbered and pounded behind. The major was affable, full of anticipation for a good holi-

day. He talked gayly about the shooting to come—King wondered whether with just the teeniest bit too much familiarity. He joked. He asked amateurish questions about the bush—perhaps the teeniest bit too amateurish for so clever looking a man.

They halted for a sandwich lunch and a stretch; and the major had not a care in the world.

They halted again for the ceremony of scalding tea in the prevailing ninety degrees of temperature; and the major only perspired and mopped tenderly at his face that was beginning to feel the sun.

It was toward evening camp time that he hazarded the remark:

"I say, aren't you heading a bit over to the westward, old man? Isn't Tadyeni more south?"

King's further eyebrow flickered. But he explained shortly:

"N'gwent River. Three days ahead. The old ford washed out last rainy season. We have to work round by Lokri's Shamba."

"Oh, did it? I hadn't heard that!" the major exclaimed. "I thought—" He stopped abruptly.

"You wouldn't know about it," said King, "being a business man in Malende. "It's only us back-bush trekkers who'd be interested."

The major remained thoughtful.

The next day's travel bore even more to the West. Close to the equator, where the sun jumps up and seems to hang in mid-sky for most of the day, it is easy for a rank tyro to lose sense of direction. But the major ventured upon an expostulation again.

"Bad country to the south," King grunted.

At the lunch hour he, who never misjudged the way, ran the car into a dead end of thorn tangle. He got out and shouted to the Hottentot in the far following truck to come and scout a way out.

Out of view, he lay comfortably on his back and focused his field glasses on the empty sky. He frowned and handed the glasses to the Hottentot. He had long ago taught the little man how to use them as an adjunct to his own extraordinary sight.

"Read me the specks in the high heaven, apeling."

The Hottentot grimaced as if with all the throes of acute pain as he went through the still difficult process of adjusting the glasses to the close set of his eyes. At last he settled down to steady scrutiny.

"Vultures," he announced. "Very high and not circling; traveling in the direction of Unduli Pan."

"Ha! The swine haven't lost a moment's time," King growled. "How far, little wise one, do you judge Unduli Pan?"

The Hottentot stood on one leg and thought—not reasoned; he groped, rather, for the directional inspiration that some bush dwellers can evoke.

"This half-day, *bwana,* and another half-day, going fast in the small *moto* wagon. A half day and a whole day, going in the big *motos.*"

"Come with us in the small *moto,*" King told him. "Bring the grub box."

He headed the car openly for Unduli Pan.

Even Ponsonby from the back seat noted the major's restiveness. He kept looking at King nervously and at last burst out:

"You're sure you're not losing time, I hope. 'Pon my word, it seems we're coming a long way out of the way."

"I know very exactly what I'm doing—now," King told him.

The Major digested that for half an hour. As he turned over its possible meanings in his mind his face changed. The affability passed from it. A scowl had the curious effect of drawing his eyes together. He looked like an angry

and a violent-tempered man—and dangerous.

"I want tea." He barked at last. "Damn it, I'm having enough of this."

KING stopped the car. An alcohol stove and a tea kit were a vital part of the outfit. They all got out. The major stamped back and forth, his hands in his coat pockets, scowling in furious thought. Like something trapped—an angry beast in a cage.

Suddenly he stopped and snatched his hand out of his pocket, a thick, stubby-barreled revolver in it; and in his handling of that he was certainly no tyro. His carefully studied accent passed from him as his rage grew.

"Now then, my bumptious Mister Kingi Bwana, you'll tell me exactly what you're driving at."

King looked at the gun, the gun hand, up the steady arm to the eyes. No foolish plays with this man. He would shoot. "Perhaps you know," King said evenly. "You're so clever."

The major's mustache curled away from his teeth and revealed startlingly the reason why he affected the softening effect of it with his beard. While his face twitched with uncontrolled fury, his eyes set in that menacing anomaly, the cold blankness of a killer.

"Pretty damn smart yourself, aren't you?" His words came like shots. "Even fooled me for a while." He crouched slightly and his shoulders stiffened. His pistol arm tensed. King began edging over toward the car.

The major's teeth glared out again. "That's not so clever. You won't fool me again. I know where your gun is. But it's the right direction. Closer to Ponsonby there where I can see the two of you."

King stepped quickly over and stood beside Ponsonby. The major pivoted slowly to cover them both.

"That's better. And you needn't grin. Ponsonby doesn't wear a gun either. I was clever enough as far back as last night to look through your clothes."

"Yeah?" King showed his annoyance. "That's one I didn't give you credit for."

But the major was deadly.

"You don't bluff me out of anything, my smart lad. All I'm wondering is how to dispose of you fellows." His eyes flickered to the surrounding bush. "Those damn trucks will be coming on our track and—"

He bit off the words in venomous thought.

"Perhaps you're clever enough to make 'em believe a lion got us," said King.

Expression flashed into the deadly blank eyes. Doubt. No man would be so cool unless—

"Yep," King laughed at him. "You're not so well heeled as you figured. Let him feel the point, Kaffa. Don't move, Big Shot."

But the major jerked spasmodically as a half inch of Somali knife jabbed in exactly over his spine and pushed with steady pressure. Then he stiffened.

"Not quite clever enough," King grinned at him wide. "Better drop the gun, because I'm going to have to pay him not to kill you."

Mustache and beard snarled apart again but the hand that had been tensing on the gun-butt relaxed.

King walked forward and picked it up. He laughed sardonically.

"Yeh, I don't wear one of these things in this law-abiding colony of yours. A mistake. I should. That was very nicely done, good apeling. There will be a reward of tobacco and a blanket striped as the lightning."

He looked over to Ponsonby, jauntily and with a vast satisfaction.

"Learning more about your colony every day, eh? Now here's where *you* decide. Me, I'd recommend for you to take this gun and shoot this snake for a venomous thing that's organized the

filthiest racket in Africa and collected a gang that use guns or poison or what have you. But I reckon you've still got your traditions, and maybe you want to take him alive."

Ponsonby looked at King, wondering, hesitant. He had grown to rely on him for every move. King grinned at him.

"I'm not 'conducting' you any longer. My contract ran out yesterday. You're on your own feet."

"Oh!" Ponsonby assimilated that thought. Then his mouth tightened in decision. "Well, I—I shall arrest him."

"O. K. Go ahead. Take him," said King unconcernedly.

It was beginning to seep into Ponsonby's understanding that King expected him personally to go through the motions of making the arrest.

"Yeh. One of your laws," King accused him. "I've been up against it before. And what a yawp a defense lawyer sharp put up when I pulled in a sacred British subject—me having no 'authority.' The D.C. had to take it to the Governor to iron it out. Y'see I'm not even hired by you. I'm in mutiny and rebellion against this snake. You read up your fat book of regulations some day. It'll give you a gripe when you're out alone in these backwoods and things are happening fast. Though of course—" King's tone passed from the cynical to the insinuating—"You, as an officer of the law, can call upon me and my man to assist you in the performance—and et cetera and so on."

"Oh," said Ponsonby again, "I see. Well, damme if I'll call on you—yet."

King's grin was benediction. "Go to it, feller. And you, Major Big Shot, if you try to pull anything particularly vile, I'll give you to the Hottentot as a present. Kinder unfair to cramp your style that way; but it's the decent man who's got inhibitions that's always got the handicap."

The major snarled hate at King. "Ho, a fight promoter, yes?"

King shook his head. "Nope. A trainer. I've got some good material here and I'm showing him the ropes. This isn't going to be a fight. You're heavier 'n him; but you've been being a smart business man while he's been going through a couple weeks of the stiffest kind of training.

AND it wasn't a fight. It was a scramble. Heave and punch. Knock down, roll over, squirm and punch again. Dust flew, clothes ripped, thorn bushes crackled, flattened and sprang up again. Neither man was a boxer. It was a test only of courage and stamina—plenty of both.

But finally Ponsonby sat on the major's back and held his arms twisted behind him. Torn, scratched up a good deal more. But on top.

King nodded. "Good. That is, not bad. Africa is a tough school, no?"

Then he explained. "You had to do this, youngster. Y'see, from the foolish kind of poke you gave Pigeon Toe in his face a while back, I guessed you'd never been in a fight before—back in your high-brow home. And you had to know you could lick a tough man. 'Cause we got some other tough people to go and lick. Now I'll show you how to tie him up."

He fished a piece of gun-cleaner drawstring from his pocket and tied the major's thumbs behind his back. Then with his hunting-knife he slit through the prisoner's shooting coat and shirt—two holes, wide apart, well up between the shoulders. He passed the twine through the holes.

"And that man," he hissed softly as he knotted it, "won't escape unless someone lets him. Y'see, a man has no strength to pull that way. He can sit and he can lie and he isn't tortured—damn him. I'm sorry at least once a week in this country I've got some inhibitions myself."

Far shouts back and forth and cursings of thorn twigs that reached in and

raked the drivers' faces indicated that the trucks were coming up.

"Since they've caught up with us; and since we know now exactly what's what," said King, "maybe we'd better keep the army with us. Looks like we'll be needing 'em. And by the same token they ought to be told just what they're going up against. A machine-gun 's an awful shock to men who don't expect it."

He told the men briefly what sort of a situation be expected to find. Desperate men were to be captured—or at all events their crime must be made to cease. There would be wounds; probably death. Therefore now was the time to say whether they would carry on, or would Barounggo have to search for other men."

"But, *bwana,* what talk is this?" The Masai was enormously indignant. "What need to offer shame to these men? These be Elmorani. See their garters? Each man of them has slain his lion with shield and spear."

"All right! All right!" King mollified him. "That they would run from battle I did not think. But they should know that a fight is before them."

"No man will go away," the Masai took it upon himself to guarantee. "Mine own honor is at stake. Did I not bring them, having first tested each one? As witness this scar on my shoulder not yet healed. That tall fellow it was, he who grins; for I bet him a cow that he could not touch me. A slip it was, *bwana.* A mischance. Else he would never—"

"I take over thy bet, braggart," King laughed at him. "I will pay it. If that tall warrior pricked thee it was well earned."

The tall man lifted his spear in salute.

"*Assanti sana, Bwana, m'kubwa, m'pagi.* Thank you indeed, *bwana,* great chief, generous one. For such a chief a small matter of some fighting is a good thing."

"You do not fight for me." King told them. "You are servants of the *serkali.* And as such, those who may receive wounds, the *serkali* will care for them; those who may die, the *serkali* will care for their women in their villages. My own men I have made provision to care for. Therefore there is no need of anxiety for this fight."

The men tapped their spears against their shield rims, a crescendo rattle of warriors' applause to a chief.

"Yes," said Ponsonby, "I've heard it said around the club and other places that Kingi Bwana knows how to handle Africans."

"Something else for you to remember," King shelved the compliment.

"And who," Ponsonby half-whispered the question to himself, "in all this merry-go-round cares for the welfare of Kingi Bwana? Seems like there's nobody left."

"That," said King quickly, "is the compensation I must pay for the privilege of being a free man. And brother—" he spread his shoulders and breathed deeply of the dust-laden air—"It's worth it."

But time was speeding and here they stood talking.

"Come along! Come along!" King bustled into action. "We've got ground to cover. Dammit, I doubt we'll make it in two stop-overs now. If only we'd gone direct we'd have been there by now. But you had to have 'proof' on this clever big shot."

He motioned to a couple of brawny spearmen to pick him up.

"We'll feel sorta cleaner, I guess, if your prisoner rides in the baggage truck. And I hope to God he tries to escape. These Elmorani lads aren't handicapped by any inhibitions. Come ahead. Let's get going. We've got two of 'em. Only a few more to get."

"Dashed if I don't believe," said Ponsonby, as the car bucked over the mimosa roots, "that you're jolly well pepped about bucking this gun gang."

"Who, me?" King flouted the idea.

"I'm not bucking any gang. You're the game-warden. I'm just bringing my client, Major Devanter, along to let him see how you run your job. 'Cause your law is going to let him off easy on all the 'evidence' you've got on him; and I figure it'll be good for him to know, then, what happens around the water-holes."

The thorn scrub country began to open up into the familiar rolling plain.

King examined the sky with his glasses and checked the direction of the microscopic specks with a pocket compass.

Yes, Unduli Pan was the scene of operations. He urged the drivers to speed. Later the Hottentot lifted his snub nose and announced:

"There is dead meat in the air."

"Good Lord! Can he really smell it?" Ponsonby wondered.

"I wouldn't bet one way or the other. Some of those fellows can pretty near outsmell a dog." King wasn't interested just now in ethnological theories. What he wanted to do was to reach the tree country before night, hide up the car, and creep down to a favorable position somewhere near the pool before daylight should come again and betray them.

"If luck holds—if these cars stand up to the punishment we're putting 'em through—we'll make it," he insisted almost prayerfully.

And luck held. The gods, rewarding those who obeyed their book of rules, gave it to them.

They laid up the trucks, left the mechanics as guards over the prisoner, crept through jungle paths headed by the Hottentot's animal sense of direction and night vision; and presently their own noses told them that in the jungle about them were dead things.

Ponsonby could hear King swearing while he fiercely enjoined silence upon the others.

"What I can't make out about all this," he told King, "is whether we're afraid of bumping into them, or they're afraid we may find 'em."

"I don't know who else is, "said King, "but I am."

The next thing they knew they could feel a moist vapor on their faces from the surface of the little lake. In the tree fringe they bedded down to wait for morning.

"Elephants often drink at dawn," King whispered. "That'll maybe get the murderers to show their hand."

IT WAS a nerve-racking and gruesome wait. Warm eddying breezes brought whiffs of charnel odor from here and there. Out on the encircling mud belt and in sundry places in the jungle hyenas howled their raucous call and fought over foul food and gibbered the maniac wail that fools have called a laugh.

Dawn came. Everybody crouched expectantly. Soon something would happen. But what? Nobody knew. Attack or be attacked? Ponsonby found himself vaguely wishing that his own expression might be as fiercely expectant as those of the *askaris*. It came to him all of a sudden that here he was with these spearmen whom he had taken into service as native wardens, and he was not in any way expecting to arrest anybody.

"At any time now," King whispered to him, "a herd may come down to drink. Watch. Big as they are, you'll hardly hear 'em."

Ponsonby peered from amongst the leaves. The light grew stronger. Suddenly he stiffened. Across the mud slope some two hundred yards distant, he thought he saw a movement in the dry tops of the fringe of dead reed left by the receding water. He watched. It *was* a movement, an undulant waving. Something pushing cautiously through. Too small to be an elephant—that reed didn't grow high enough. The movement reached the edge of the reeds. The cause of it came out into view.

A man. He stood and surveyed the expanse of open mud bank up and down.

Ponsonby's breath sucked sharply in.

"Pigeon Toe!"

He raised his rifle. He did not know why. Somewhere in the back of his mind was a realization that this was not self-defense, as it had been once before when he peered from cover and a man pointed a rifle at him. His hesitation almost lost him his life.

Pigeon Toe saw his motion. His rifle jerked up on the instant and fired.

It was only King's tremendous shove that sent him reeling and saved him.

"Durn fool!" King was abusing him. "I told you you couldn't get Pigeon Toe that easy. He's a hunter. Damn, I didn't spot him soon enough."

A startled squeal sounded in the jungle on the heels of the shot and behind the place where the man had stood. King gripped Ponsonby's arm.

"Baby elephant! They're coming!"

On the heels of that again two more shots rang muffled in the jungle and a short burst of machine-gun fire.

There followed a hell's pandemonium of hoarse giant screams, squeals, brazen trumpetings, and a crashing and thundering of vast bodies stampeding through everything in their path. A single furious trumpeting remained to split the air in short blasts, and short rushes crashed back and forth in the jungle.

King was swearing through clenched teeth.

"The swine! The filthy beasts! You heard 'em! Hell, I didn't like to believe it, in spite of the bones. But, damn 'em! They failed this time. Pigeon Toe's shot stopped the herd, and those dumb fools cut loose from poor position. But they hit one. The hellions! Not to drop him clean, blast 'em. Just to hurt him and make him sore."

Ponsonby was just as outraged as was King. His impulse was for immediate reprisal.

"Anyhow, that shows us where they are. Shall we up and go for 'em?"

King looked at the crouching men, fierce, eager.

"You're durn right, we'll—" But his habitual caution came back to him. "We'll have to be careful—can't rush a machine-gun. But we can cut across to that end before they get organized, and if they're dumb enough to stay in the jungle, we'll show 'em, by God, what jungle men can do."

"Well, I'm ready. Tell them."

"You tell 'em." King grinned maliciously at Ponsonby. "They're your men. I'm not going to get blamed for anything that your men may do in the heat of a fight. I'm just tagging along 'cause I'm scared to be caught by those devils alone."

"I can't tell 'em an awful lot in Swahili," said Ponsonby. "But damme, I can lead 'em."

"Good lad! The sooner, the better, then."

They pushed out from their cover and started to sprint, each man for himself, across an arc of the open mud slope, heading for the further fringe of jungle where the shooting had been.

The leading runner, a tall greyhound of a man, had barely gone fifty yards when a vicious crackle of another gun blasted out from the dark tunnel of an animal run to his left. His hands clawed out before him and his impetus carried him like a diver to land on his face and slide on the hard-baked mud.

The next runner came into the deadly zone, and eagerly racing a hand's breadth behind him, another.

The deadly crackle continued to spurt from the tunnel mouth. Both men pitched and slid on their faces. The spear of one of them stuck into the ground and slanted teetering. A bullet cut splinters from it; and the shaft bent over the hung.

The next leading man saved himself from the death zone by flinging himself sideway, from where he scrambled to his

feet and followed the rest in a mad rush for the shelter of the jungle.

"Phe-ew! I'd never guessed that." Ponsonby was panting and furious. "How the devil could those rotters know we were hostile to them? They couldn't have understood that Pigeon Toe's shot was fired at humans at all."

"They didn't," King spat savagely. "This bunch was holed up to cut down anything that the other bunch missed. They took us as we came because I tell you they're letting nothing stop their business."

He addressed the remaining men, five of them, besides his own too.

"Warriors, this was a mischance that came upon us by reason of being over impetuous and rushing like foolish game beasts into the open. In the jungle path these men lie hidden. I know not how many. By stealth, then, they must—"

But the men, scowling and muttering, were already slipping through the tangle of bush and vine. There was nothing to do but follow them. King dropped on his belly and wormed into a low opening.

"You stay here," he hissed over his shoulder at Ponsonby. "This is jungle work."

But Ponsonby's face grinned close over his heel. "You're not 'conducting' me now. I'm on my own feet."

A short burst of fire crashed out a little to their right. King reached back and dragged Ponsonby up beside him.

"Damn-fool game-warden. So listen. That gives us their exact direction. Keep trees between as you go; or they'll likely cut you in half."

WITH enormous caution they crept forward. Nothing dared be brushed past. Twigs had to be carefully bent aside, dead leaves picked out of the way.

Another burst crashed out. The incredible clatter of bullets amongst leaves and twigs receded into the distance; then came back in crisp whispering echoes.

Again a spasmodic burst; and the shattering of twigs in another direction.

King's lips mouthed the barely whispered words:

"Nervous. Shooting blind at sounds."

Sounds apparently were everywhere; faint clicks and infinitesimal rustlings from every direction around the hidden gunmen, for frenzied bullets rattled away this way and that.

Chameleon-slow now. All the caution of that watchful creature stalking an insect—a poisonous, stinging insect. Even shooting blind, a machine-gun spray might cut a man in half.

Ponsonby's eye found itself before a camera-hole opening between twigs; and in that strained position he froze. He did not dare move. The machine-gun seemed to be looking right at him.

There they were. Three men crouching in a dim funnel that bored through the jungle. Two of them held rifles, the other squatted behind the deadly gun; nervous, fear in their evil eyes.

Typical gunmen, callous enough to pain and death in their own haunts, but bewildered now in unfamiliar ground. Fear of their own death twitched their faces.

The gun whirled on its swivel and menaced another point, jerked round to another, then spun back to Ponsonby.

His breath froze in him. He was not aware of having made a sound. He dared risk none by moving.

Sounds were everywhere. The machine-gunner's eyes flashed about him. The gun muzzle wavered with them.

Then Ponsonby saw him suddenly clutch at his shirt front. Just as though a wasp had blundered in and stung him. The trigger hand jerked away to join the clutch. From between his fingers a spear blade protruded.

All in one convulsive, astounding second there was the blade and suddenly red fingers clawing at it.

Then the great form of the Masai rose up out of the bushes behind him.

"*Hau!*" he shouted, full-throated, like the coughing roar of a lion in its spring.

One of the rifle men turned to meet him. He left his spear and hurled his dark bulk at the man, arms and legs asprawl. Together they went down.

The third man was swinging his rifle up, when another dark form jumped high above the struggling pair and arrived upon him, spear first.

Then a rush of leaping naked forms and the hissing, "*Ss-ghee*" of the Elmorani, gruesomely indicative of spears passing through flesh. Then the Masai, tugging to retrieve his spear.

Ponsonby stood beside King, big-eyed and a little sick.

The Masai lifted his red blade in the salute that courtesy to one's master demands and reported.

"Three of them, Bwana. Against three of ours. We are even."

"Yet it is not enough," came a voice.

"We are ahead," said King. "One slain before and one captured."

"How many more are there in the other group?" Ponsonby asked.

"Durned if I know. I'd always figured six or seven all told—and Pigeon Toe. They won't be so easy. Do you know how to use one of these things?"

Ponsonby shook his head. "No. I missed the war. Don't you?"

"Hell, no. I'm a hunter, not a soldier." King stood with his thumbs hooked in his belt and teetered on his toes, frowning. "So the handicap is still against us. Well, waiting won't help. *Andamani Wasikari.* Come ahead, men —I mean, tell your men to come along. But this time I lead. This bunch will know who's looking for them."

Keeping careful cover, they worked round the rim of the jungle pool. Ponsonby, exerting all his faculties to emulate the silence of the others, was surprised when King held up his hands to stop everything.

"Over there, a little to your left. About fifty yards, I'd judge it. Listen."

Then Ponsonby got it too. A slow rustling of leaves thrust aside. A successive crackling of leathery, half-moist twigs as a huge foot sunk deeper into the jungle debris. A long, windy snuffle and a woosh of expelled air.

"Something else looking for 'em," said King grimly. "And a lot madder'n us and ten times as patient. People'll tell you a wounded buffalo is the most dangerous beast in Africa. But I'll bet on an elephant every time 'cause he's that much cleverer. A good ally."

"But Good Lord." Ponsonby whispered it. "Won't he charge down on us?"

"Sure. Like an army tank—if he winds us. But what wind there is is across. And their hearing isn't any too good, spite of their bat ears. A good man—like, say, a Kavinrondo hunter—can creep up to 'em and jab 'em with a spear. We'll just have to watch our wind."

The next thing, voices stopped them. An oath and a querulous complaint.

"Cawn't see a foot in this blawsted tangle. 'Ow the 'ell are we goin' ter shoot?"

And then: "You shut yer faice, Okey. If they tries ter do any stalkin' through this stuff we'll bloody well rip 'em wide open."

They stood at the edge of a patch of elephant grass, stiff-stemmed canes that waved dusty plumes twenty feet in the air; dense, crowding out all other vegetation. No live thing could pass through that without betraying its course.

"Aa-ah!" King breathed. "Pigeon Toe's doing. Yeh, he knows his bush." He looked to left and right and he sucked in his lip.

"Yes, a crafty nest. A machine-gun spray would cut through that stuff like dead corn stalks.

To the right the cane patch bordered on the open circle of the lake. To the

left the elephant snuffled and searched with vindictive patience.

The vagrant wind blew from the pool, quartering across the cane patch, passing on between them and the angry beast. To work around to the further side of the patch—even if that might prove to be of any use—would surely bring the man scent directly down wind to the brute. And then even an expert and cool-headed rifleman in that close jungle might not stop it; and any luckless spearmen in the way would be lost.

It seemed to be a checkmate; an endless game of wait for one side or the other to make a mis-move.

THE Hottentot scuttled from behind his sheltering tree to where King and Ponsonby stood. His eyes glittered with excitement. He looked like a monkey contemplating a fearful and irresistible mischief.

"Bwana," he whispered, "*Heitsi Eibib* himself has prepared this opportunity. If Bwana therefore permits—" He stopped to sniff the wind again, wetting his splay nostrils with his tongue and swinging his head to catch its exact direction.

"What's *Heights-I-bib?*" Ponsonby had to know.

"Hottentot nature god," King whispered shortly. "What is in thy head, Little Wise One?"

"See, bwana. Thus is the wind. There stalks the beast that they have wounded. It is in my head that I can draw him round to catch their scent."

King stared at him, and his own eyes began to shrink to thin slits as he contemplated the mad idea.

"By golly," he murmured, "I believe you could. Lord, what an ally! It will be a danger, Little One. Death will follow at thy very skin."

"A lesser danger, Bwana, than that devil-devil gun."

King's nod was reluctant. "Go then, bold apeling. And I myself will lay a stone for *Heitsi Eibib* with thee."

The Hottentot scuttled off. He whispered to the Masai and the other men. They edged down closer to King and Ponsonby. His agile form melted into the underbrush.

"By golly!" King felt for the wind. "If he does it, the brute will miss us by scant feet. If the wind shifts—" Mechanically he eased the breech of his rifle open to assure himself once over again that a cartridge was in the chamber.

A motionless minute passed. Another dragged itself on. Some small creature, encouraged by the silence, scuffled in the leaves. In the cane patch was a faint crackle of some man changing a cramped position. Ponsonby's mind groped with a Dantesque visualization of hurtling chaos and of the terrifying unsuspicion of the men within the cane patch—*If* the wind should not shift. Time crawled on.

The silence in the further jungle was startled by a loud whoosh, and a long steamy inhalation.

"Ha!" from King.

Followed a scrambling in the underbrush and a vast pushing aside of higher branches. A whoosh of expelled dust again—nearer.

A faster scrambling, and the crunch of huge feet. Right into the line of the wind over the cane patch! A quick succession of puffs from enormous bellows.

Then a blast of shattering brass—furious, vengefully triumphant. A bulk heaved itself to momentum with a vast crashing of twigs, branches, trees and the pounding of great feet.

Almost at spear's length an unseen tornado thundered past. It screamed brazen rage again. Then it was rushing through the cane.

Dry stems crackled like the gun. The gun crackled back. A short wild burst at blind destruction. Sharp shouts! Yells! A clank of trampled metal! An awful

scream expelled with unhuman force! A further blind crashing through the cane and out to open silence beyond.

"Ulu-lu-lu-lu!" The Masai yelled. The rest of the spearmen took up their war cry and in a jostling pack dashed into the swath of destruction.

It came to King in a flash that they had arranged this concerted rush amongst themselves in order to forestall any restraint upon their vengeance for their fellows. He raced after them, into a pall of swirling dust that made fuzzy the outlines of twisted stems and broken reed. He stumbled to the central shambles in time only to hear the hissing accompaniment to spear thrusts and to see the heaving pile of dark limbs.

Outside somewhere the elephant trumpeted short angry blasts.

"Good Lord, he'll be back on us," Ponsonby warned.

King was tugging at struggling men.

"Kaffa!" He demanded. "Who has seen the Hottentot? Was he here?"

But it was from behind that the little man scrambled down the lane of shattered stems, as pleased with himself as a monkey that has performed a difficult trick.

"Ha, apeling!" King's concern was allayed. "Splendidly done! I have feared for thy foolish life. We shall speak of this later."

Again the elephant trumpeted from outside; querulous; further than before.

Ponsonby was trying to drag the men away, to urge them by signs to run for the shelter of the jungle. King had time to explain their carefree laughter.

"He's lost the scent. Don't you see, in this tangle he couldn't see what was underfoot. He just charged ahead like a runaway truck, and now he's the other side of the wind."

The taut anxiety of furious events was passing from his own face. "Well, this looks like a clean-up. I'm afraid your men haven't taken any prisoners. But—" He shrugged. "I don't know that you can altogether blame 'em for that."

The Masai came to report with a huge satisfaction. "Four of them, Bwana. One—he who screamed—the elephant trampled like a slug in his path. The gun also is broken. But the Crooked Foot is not here."

"Ss-so?" King's own growing satisfaction clouded. "Yes, he was the only one smart enough to know what was coming, and he ducked just in time. There's still a danger then."

"But his gun, *bwana,* is here." The Hottentot rose from his close investigation of everything. "See, *bwana,* the iron plate at the butt. The screw is missing. Such a mark was left by the gun when Crooked Foot stood in thought upon the day of his poisoning of the drink."

"Ha! Then it must have been nip and tuck for him. He must have squeezed into the cane, and in the general uproar he wormed out—on the side away from us. He can't have gotten far. Out, you men! Out of here and fan out in the further jungle! That man of all of them, must be captured. What of that angry elephant? There too, remains a danger."

"The elephant, Bwana," a man came back from the further lane of trampled cane, "has circled and has gone into the jungle again.

"The same side as we must hunt for Crooked Foot. The more need for care. Away! Away! Kaffa, see what trail may be found. The rest, fifty paces apart. Swift! Swift!"

KING pushed Ponsonby to the outer fringe that bordered the open belt of mud.

"Easier going for you."

Himself he took the next station, some fifty feet further into the jungle. Beyond him the men strung out; and the drive commenced.

Slow, of necessity; for Pigeon Toe would be clever enough to hide and

double back. Zigzagging the men went. Every possible cover had to be probed.

Driven like game, the thought struck Ponsonby. Like the game he had so often driven to slaughter. Presently he was looking at great circular tracks in clay that led into a trampled lane through the brush. Even he could read those.

"Kingi, oh Kingi." He called softly. "Here's where it went in."

King's voice clucked impatience. "The same durn condition as before. It's somewhere in there, and the wind blowing across. If we cut its wind, we'll be charged. An elephant doesn't quit."

He passed the word on to the men. "Ears open for its presence, and pass immediate warning down."

"Aye, *bwana*," came a further voice. "But Crooked Foot, being before us, must cut the wind first."

"Ye-eh. That is so. That is so indeed. By golly, I believe we've got him between us and a deadline."

With inexorable thoroughness the drive continued. Everybody heard the explosive snort out of the jungle ahead. Everybody stopped; silent, alert.

Below the snort—between it and the pool—a stealthy scuffling sounded. Uncertain in its direction; a little forward, a little back. If that should be Pigeon Toe, he would know exactly what the snort indicated.

"And he's weaponless," muttered King.

From where the snort had come commenced a slow heaving of branches; questing snuffles and an advance down toward the scuffle.

Whatever it was that scuffled could not wait. Behind it were spears. Before it—well, a hope that if the vague wind should by good chance eddy for just a minute or so, it could pass through the

zone of scent—and then the zone would stretch between it and the spears.

The scuffling pushed forward. The vast movement closed down upon it. The cautious jungle erupted furious sounds. A brass scream of rage; another scream of fear; rushing bodies; the rending of underbrush.

Ponsonby, out in the open, yelled with excitement.

"Halloo! For'ard away!"

Just as though he might have been out with the hounds and had seen the fox break cover. The next moment his joyous halloo changed to a strangled:

"Oh, my God!"

King pushed through to the outer fringe in time to see Pigeon Toe racing madly across the hard mud slope. Thundering enormously behind him, the elephant.

That was King's first view of it. Its shoulder, he saw in a flash, was gouted with blood that ran down and clotted over its flank. It limped on its nearer fore leg. But it gained horribly on the runner.

It was instinct for King to throw up his rifle. His sight moved to different points on the receding bulk. And then very deliberately he lowered his weapon.

"No," he said. "I can't stop it. A rear end shot like this. Only hurt it and make it madder."

Men broke from the bushes. They howled encouragement. It was easy to see where their sympathy lay.

King scowled, tight-eyed, at the grim race. With a grim sense of justice he said: "Let the gods of Africa decide. He's broken pretty near every rule in their book. Let 'em judge. If he can reach the water and swim under just a little ways the elephant will lose him. Then I'll shoot it for my damned inhibitions' sake and we'll make him a prisoner—if so happen there's no crocodiles. Let the gods decide."

And according to their dark wisdom they decided.

The man sprinted desperately, screeching terror as he ran. The vengeful beast rushed behind him like a pursuing engine. Twenty feet from the pool, when hope of safety for the man began to glimmer, the beast seemed to realize the fact too. It reached forward its trunk in a bunting sort of buffet. It seemed barely to touch the man; but it slung him the full twenty feet to the soft mud at the water's very edge.

For an instant he floundered desperately. Then a ponderous foot like a piston smashed down on him and drove him to its own knee depth into mud and spouting spray. Black bubbles gurgled up.

The beast screamed hoarse rage and disappointment at its sudden loss. Its trunk groped down into the thick ooze. It screamed rage again. Its feet kneaded the pulp beneath them ever deeper. Belly deep it stood in the black muck and trumpeted its blasts of unappeased fury.

"Come away," said King. "Under cover, all of us, before it sees us and comes. I don't want to have to shoot that good elephant.

In a long silence they walked to find their trucks. It was not till they had passed well away from the outlying odors of dead meat that King indulged in his characteristic stretch and deep inhalation of clean air and said very practically:

"Well, I guess that's that."

Ponsonby shook himself out of his thoughts. "Yes," he said. "I suppose so. I imagine that racket is quite thoroughly scotched. I have a great deal to thank you for, Kingi Bwana."

"Me?" King flouted the idea. "Hey, don't you try and blame any of your high-handed doings on me. You're the game-warden. They're your men. I've just been a spectator around here. And if you want my opinion, I'll tell you I

think the game department has done a pretty thorough job. There's only two things I'm sorry for."

"What?" said Ponsonby quickly. "Because I want—I mean, even as a useless spectator, I shall continue to need your opinion."

"First thing I'm sorry is for you," said King with genuine pain. "For the reports you'll have to write to headquarters about all this. Letters, explanations, acres of 'em. And ex-soldier clerks'll write acres back and want sketch maps 'cause they've been taught that's the only way to understand anything."

Ponsonby's face clouded. "Yes, dash it all, I suppose they'll want report. But dammit, I have a lot to do here. I must trek around and get to know the district and place these men where they're needed and organize my lines of information and—Well, I'll send 'em their bally reports when I have time to get around to 'em."

King beamed upon him. "Brother," he said, "I think you've learned. The clerks'll throw hemorrhage fits in their swivel chairs. But I'll tell you what I'll do—save you some trouble. I've got no job here now; so I may as well go in. I'll see the D. C. and tell him the story; so he'll understand the thinnest of your reports."

Ponsonby was immensely relieved. "That would be splendid. Save no end of bother. And what's the second thing you're not satisfied about? If you must go, I'll need all the advice you can leave behind."

"Yeh, but you won't take it," said King. "I'm sorry as hell that nothing happened to the Big Shot."

And so King told the story to the D.C. And the D.C. said: "Kingi Bwana, I believe you would demoralize an archangel. The needs of Colonial Administration subsist upon a diet of reports and office files, which I cannot change and you cannot understand."

"Yeh, but I've learned something," said King. "Putting it simple, the duties of Colonial Administration mean getting your job done. And Commish Bwana, that lad may be no good at home, but I'm telling you, you've got a game-warden back there now."

BILL ADAMS

A DECENT SAILORMAN

HE STOOD three inches better than six feet. He was plenty broad. His hair was black, and there was lots of it, a regular mane. He'd a pair of big blue eyes in a big face, with thick black brows above them. His long nose ended in a sort of blob. His hands were huge and bony, with broad bony wrists. His fellow-apprentices used to rag him about the size of his feet.

"Polly, one of your sea boots is stuck in the midship freeing port, so the water can't run off the deck," one of them would say. A freeing port is several feet long by maybe thirty inches high. I don't know which of his comrades first called him Polly. I know why he did, though. He was about as little like a girl as any man could be. A matter of contrasts.

The other apprentices of the *Borderer*, like the vast majority of sea apprentices, were long on the girls. Polly didn't care a rap for girls. He never talked about girls. He never joined the ship with any girl's picture in his pocket. He'd listen to Pat, Chink, and Tommie, talking of their girls, with a bored look. Maybe he'd say, "You chaps haven't any sense." And, of course, one or other would come back at him with, "Polly, you're so cussed ugly that no girl'd look at you!"

The *Borderer's* apprentices were all of an age. They'd all started to sea as first voyagers together, and taken the greenhorn's hell as it came. That first voyage was round Cape Stiff to B. C.

and back. By when they started their second voyage, which was round Stiff to Oregon, they were handy lads enough. By when they joined the *Borderer*, for their third voyage, they were all big huskies, and cracking fine sailors.

They went round Stiff that voyage too, to Frisco. There were fifty square-riggers in Frisco when the *Borderer* came in. Her four apprentices challenged all the apprentices in port to a rowing race, a boxing match, a wrestling match, a tug of war, and a race to the masthead and back of the loftiest ship in port.

Polly pulled stroke oar in the *Borderer's* gig, and she whipped the nearest gig by six lengths. Chink won the boxing for the *Borderer*. Tommie won the wrestling. Polly was anchor man on the tug of war team; they won that, too, in a walk-away.

The loftiest ship in the port was a Yankee three-skysail-yarder, that carried no apprentices. The *Borderer's* apprentices drew lots as to who should represent their ship. Polly won the draw, and won the masthead race—by letting go the rigging on his way down when he was a good forty feet from the deck, and landing, like a cat, on his feet. By just a shade, Polly was the best of the *Borderer's* apprentices. By a long chalk, he was the best apprentice in Frisco.

IT WAS after dark when the four joined the ship for their fourth and last voyage as apprentices. She was bound round Stiff again! The second mate came into the half-deck and told them so. Pat, Chink, and Tommie swore. They were sick of Stiff and of the West Coast girls; and had hoped for a voyage to Sydney or Melbourne. Polly said never a word. Stiff or Agulhas were all one to him.

When the second was gone Pat pulled from his pocket the photos of his three latest girls. Every apprentice picked up different girls each time the ship was home, of course.

"How's that for scenery?" he asked, and added: "I call 'em Fore, Main, and Mizzen."

"Not so bad," said Chink, "but look at these!" And he pulled out a couple of photos. "I call 'em Port and Starboard," said he, and asked, "How'll you swap Main for Starboard, Pat?"

"Go easy," said Tommie. "Wait a bit. Look at my girl. I call her Skysail."

Paying no attention to Polly, they argued about their girls. But presently they turned to see what Polly was hammering. Pat, Chink, and Tommie gasped. He was tacking up a girl's photo above his bunk.

"That's *some* clipper!" exclaimed Pat. "I'll swap you Main and Mizzen for her, Polly."

"Hold on, Polly! I'll swap you Port and Starboard and give you my plum duff for the first three Sundays at sea."

Polly looked contemptuously at the three and said, "Go to blazes!" They looked at one another, and it was plain that each was thinking: "Well, I am jiggered!" And, of course, they began to ask Polly what her name was, where he'd met her, and so forth. All he said was, contemptuously, "Go to blazes!"

"Tumble out, you boys! Take the tug boat's line!" shouted the mate. A dock tug was come to take the *Borderer* down to the nearest dock to the river, that she might be ready to go to sea on the tide at four-thirty next morning. Out went the four, to join the foremast sailors on the forecastle head.

"Thompson, let's hear a chantey now!" said the mate. Polly Thompson was a dandy chanteyman, but now he was mute. "What's the matter? Lost your voice?" asked the mate, "All right! Some one sing!" So Pat roused up a chantey.

"Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,
Way-aye, you rolling river!

Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,
Ha, ha, we're bound away, across the wide Missouri!"

Polly never so much as came in on the chorus.

AS SOON as the ship was moored the mate sang out, "That'll do! Go below all! You boys take turns at keeping watch tonight!"

The four drew lots for watch-keeping. Polly drew first watch, from eight to ten. Maybe an hour later the other three woke with a start. The mate was looking into the half-deck, and swearing at Polly, who, instead of being out on deck keeping watch, was leaning against his bunk, staring at his girl.

When Polly was gone, Chink climbed from his bunk, took down the photo of Polly's girl and hung it in his own bunk. Pat and Tommie laughed, and the three went back to sleep. When Pat and Tommie wakened at ten Polly was dragging Chink from his bunk, cuffing his head.

"All right. Come out on deck," said Chink. Out went the four, and for the first time since they'd met as first voyagers there was a fight. It was stopped by the second mate, who came aboard before it was well started. Then, while Chink stood watch, Polly replaced the girl's photo in his own bunk. In a moment he, Pat, and Tommie were sound asleep.

Looking in through an open port, Chink, on watch, muttered, "Too bad! A good man gone to pot!"

Before dawn Pat roused his comrades. The four were sleepily drinking their coffee when the boatswain came into the half-deck.

"Hello!" said he, seeing Polly's girl. "What'll you take for that bit of silk?"

Looking the boatswain angrily in the eye, Polly said, "Go to blazes!"

A boatswain is a petty officer, of course. And the *Borderer's* boatswain fancied himself more than a little.

"Come out on deck, my young buck, and I'll teach you a lesson," said he.

The boatswain had had a few drinks the previous evening. After ten straight minutes, rising to his feet, he said, "I give you best. You're all right." And he held out his hand. Polly turned away, ignoring the hand.

The boatswain looked at Pat, Chink, and Tommie. They all shook their heads.

"If he's got it that bad, he's done for. He'll never make a decent sailor any more," said the boatswain. "A man that won't shake hands after a fair fight! Think of a bit of silk doing that to a man!"

The tug boat's whistle sounded from near by. Soon the *Borderer* was gliding out to the stream. A cold dismal morning. The foremast men, not yet over their last carousal, were cheerless. Ordinarily the apprentices would have led the way, have brought some life to the decks. But Polly's behavior had taken all the ginger out of his comrades, and he himself was mute. The mates looked at one another and shook their heads. "Making a poor start," both were thinking. "What the devil is the matter aboard this packet?"

Breakfast time came. While the apprentices were eating gloomily, the second mate looked in. Seeing the girls' photos in Pat's, Chink's, and Tommie's bunks, he entered. Polly had drawn his bunk curtains, so that his girl was hid. The second took down Tommie's girl and put her in his breast pocket.

"That's where I keep my jewelry," said he. Tommie jumped up.

"Easy, son, easy," said the second, and held out to Tommie a new penny clay pipe. "That's worth any girl's picture to any decent sailor," said he.

Tommie grinned and took the pipe. Chink took down Starboard and Port, and holding them out to the second

asked, "What'll you give me for them, sir?"

"They're trim-looking clippers, son," said the second. "But all I've got's a half plug of black baccy."

"You can have 'em, sir," said Chink; pocketing the baccy, he added, looking toward Polly, "A man who'll go nuts over a bit of silk's a fool anyway."

Putting Port and Starboard in his pocket, the second said, "I'll swap 'em to the steward for a swig of rum when we're off Stiff." Then he was gone.

Pat took down the photos of Fore, Main, and Mizzen and strolled to the sailmaker's cabin. "Sails, I need a couple of roping needles, a seaming needle, some twine, and enough canvas to make me a hammock with. How about it?" said he.

"I giffs you der needles und der twine, and I giffs you too vun bottle beer I got unders my matress," said the Dutch sailmaker; "if you vants der canvas, you gots ask der skipper."

"Righto," said Tommie, and, holding the bottle of beer to his lips, said, "Here's the skin off your nose, Sails!"

The mate called all hands on deck. A brisk wind had cleared the minds of the foremast men. They went to work with a will. So did Pat, Chink, and Tommie. Putting sail on the ship, they shouted and sang. The wind heeled her over. She lifted her bows high, and dipped them deep, getting a taste of open water after weeks in dock.

POLLY was at the wheel, steering by the wind, with orders to keep the mizzen royal just full. Even on his first voyage he'd been a cracking good helmsman. But presently the skipper looked from the chart room door to the mizzen royal. The sail was shaking. He shouted an angry order to Polly, who put the helm up. The royal filled. The skipper disappeared.

Five minutes passed and he looked from the chart room again. Again he shouted an angry order to Polly, who now had the ship too far off the wind. On the main deck Pat said to Chink, "He's thinking of that fool bit of silk. He can't even steer." The mate overhead the words.

When Polly left the wheel the mate strode up to him.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded.

"Nothing, sir," said Polly. "I'm all right, sir."

"You'd better be all right. Any man who'll get dreaming about a fool bit of silk when he's steering a ship by the wind ain't a sailor!" said the mate, and passed on. A foremast man at work near by laughed. Polly swung round to the man.

"What do you think you're laughing at?" he asked.

"A poor fool of a sea apprentice wot's got no sense," said the sailor, grinning. Polly struck him on the jaw. The man struck back. Seeing them, the skipper said to the second mate on the poop, "What's come over that big apprentice, mister? Send him to me."

"What's the matter with you?" demanded the skipper, when Polly stood before him. "First you don't steer right, and then you start a fight when you're on duty."

"Nothing, sir," said Polly. "I'm all right, sir."

"You've been drinking," said the skipper. "Apprentices aren't allowed to drink. You watch your step or I'll give you a bad reference when your apprenticeship's up. Get forward!"

Polly entered the half-deck where his three comrades were at dinner. Before sitting down he opened his bunk curtains and looked at his girl. Then, for a few minutes, the four ate in silence. It was Pat broke the silence. "Bet you a dollar Polly's girl's out with some lubberly clerk right now," said he. Polly leapt up and struck at Pat. Chink grabbed Polly's arm. Tommie laughed and rose

to his feet. For a few moments there was a free-for-all, Polly fighting the three of them. When they sat down to finish their dinners Polly's face was white as chalk, his eyes were blazing.

"I'll take you on one at a time in the dog-watch tonight," he growled.

When they went on deck after dinner the wind had shifted. The *Borderer* was rolling hard to a high following wind.

"Let her go! Bully breeze!" yelled a sailor. Piling the last of her canvas on her, they shouted and sang. A man was ordered to the lee wheel, to help the helmsman. With the wind at her heels, she was a hard ship to steer. Throughout the afternoon she ran like a hound; the crew all busy getting her gear into shape for the long voyage ahead. A misty afternoon, thick with haze; and big sprays flying.

Just before the dogwatch the weather cleared. A shout rose from the *Borderer's* decks. Close by, on the beam, was an outbound ship. All through the dogwatch the two ships raced, neck and neck; each with all her crew handy. No time for any fighting amongst the *Borderer's* apprentices. Her crew howled taunts to the crew of the rival ship. The rival's crew howled back. Only Polly was mute. No one noticed him.

MORNING found the two ships racing, neck and neck still. Both carrying full sail, with every sheet and halliard at the breaking strain. Clouds of spray driving over both ships, half-hiding them.

At eight bells the skipper of the *Borderer* said to his mate, "Send that big apprentice to the wheel, mister. The drink'll be out of him by now. He was the best helmsman I had last voyage."

"Watch your steering, now! Hold her true!" said the skipper when Polly was at the weather helm. Polly said nothing. To Tommie, at the lee wheel, the skipper said, "See you mind what you're at, now!"

Tommie said, "Aye, aye, sir!" The Biscay sky rolled low and black above the *Borderer's* masthead. The Biscay wind roared through her rigging.

A yell rang over the dark sea, from the deck of the rival. *Borderer's* main royal was sliding down. Its halliards had parted. In the five minutes it took to repair them the rival ship crept a hundred yards ahead.

A roar of joy rose from the *Borderer's* decks. The rival's fore royalmast had snapped and come down. As *Borderer* swept past her a rattle of hail beat on both ships, hiding them from one another. Harder and harder came the hail, stiffer and stiffer the wind. The mate looked to the skipper, expecting the order to take some sail in. No order came. The squall passed on, ahead. Cheer on cheer rang from the *Borderer*. The rival was a good mile astern.

Polly was gazing with dreamy eyes at the compass before him. But Tommie's arms were aching and his face beaded with great drops of sweat.

"Polly's gone clear to the bad. It's I that's doing all the steering," thought Tommie. There was no sweat on Polly's face. As Tommie hove the wheel up or down Polly moved his big hands mechanically, scarce helping at all. And no one but Tommie was aware of it.

A yell of rage rose from the *Borderer*. Then her foremast hands, her sailmaker, carpenter, cook, Chink, and Pat, and both her mates and the boatswain, were racing forward. The fore topgallant mast had snapped and was hanging down in a tangle of wreckage above the fore topsails. And with her new fore royal almost in place, the rival was fast coming up.

POLLY looked dreamily up from his compass. At the moment that he did so, he saw the skipper glance astern with a scowl on his face. Polly glanced carelessly astern, and, for the first time, was aware of the rival ship.

Something snapped in Polly's brain then.

"Hold her!" he yelled, and let go the wheel, and raced forward. The skipper tried to stop him. He evaded the skipper; paid no heed to his oaths. Next minute he was thrusting a cursing sailor out of his way; then another, and another. Then, with the sprays beating on him, he was swarming up the fore rigging, pushing past sailor after sailor, his sheath knife in his teeth.

Finding the boatswain above him, he grasped the boatswain's shoulders and hove himself bodily over him. Setting his big feet on the boatswain's shoulder, he sprang on, all but sending the cursing boatswain hurtling to the deck below. He shoved the second mate aside, and laughed at his oaths. First of any, he came to the wreckage and began to cut and to slash. He yelled orders to the sailors. He yelled orders to the boatswain, and to the second mate. They looked at one another, grinned, and obeyed. Watching from the deck below, the first mate said to himself, with twinkling eyes, "So *that's* how he is when the drink's out of him, eh?"

By when the wrecked mast was down and a new one ready to be sent up, the rival ship was almost up with the Borderer. By when the Borderer's new spars were crossed the two ships were racing neck and neck again.

"Now give me that wheel!" shouted Polly, and raced for the wheel. It was midday. He had eaten no dinner. He hurled from the wheel the weather helmsman, who fell cursing to the deck. To the lee helmsman he shouted, "Beat it! I can hold her!"

The skipper, seeing and hearing, gestured the two men to go.

Harder came the blast of the Biscay wind. A rattle of hail beat on masts, spars, and backstays, and bounced from Polly's shoulders. High as the topsail leeches, sixty feet from the sea, sprays drove over both ships in clouds. Over both ships' railings flopped the heavy sea tops, to roar across their rolling decks.

At two o'clock two strong sailors came to take the wheel from Polly.

"Beat it! Leave her to me!" he shouted. The skipper gestured to the two to go. At nigh four o'clock the skipper brought a tot of hot rum and himself laid hand upon the wheel while Polly gulped it down. Polly grinned. His skipper grinned back.

The dogwatch came. Again two sailors came to take the wheel.

"Beat it! Leave her to me!" he shouted. They left her to him.

Dusk was beginning when, with both ships driving under six topsails, a cheer rang from the *Borderer's* decks.

The rival's fore upper topsail was starting to split. Watching through his telescope, the *Borderer's* skipper eyed her weary crew as they started up the fore rigging to send the split sail down. But not all her crew were going up the fore rigging. Some were climbing up the mizzen, to take the mizzen upper topsail off their ship. For a ship cannot run with more canvas on her mizzen than on her fore. Did she try to do so she would broach to, have her masts ripped out, or spill over. Even now, the rival's two helmsmen were fighting their hardest to hold her to her course.

"I win," said the *Borderer's* skipper to himself.

Night fell. The clouds cleared off, as, shifting into nor'east, the wind came harder than ever. Frosty stars glittered above the raging Biscay sea. The rival's lights were lost far astern.

"Relieve the wheel!" ordered the *Borderer's* skipper. Two husky able seamen took the wheel from Polly.

Head erect, big blue eyes shining, Polly entered the apprentices' half-deck where his three comrades sat.

Polly went straight to his bunk, and took his girl's picture down.

"Who'll swap me a week's marmalade for this bit of silk?" asked Polly.

Polly was a decent sailorman again.

The Submarine Tradition

By

SAMUEL TAYLOR MOORE

HIS name was Marcus, his rank that of a mere ensign. It was twenty-five years ago, when all submarine officers and men were volunteers. Today half the submarine force is assigned to undersea boats without being consulted as to preference.

The submarines then in use were designated as A boats—a long way back in alphabetical history, measured from the modern V boats. The A boats were only sixty feet over all. They used small gasoline motors for charging the batteries. There are enough dangers lurking in the shell of a submersible even now when Diesel engines do the major work: the constant threat of chlorine gas should salt water seep into the electric batteries, plus the threat of leaky valves and underwater collision. In those days submarines could not cross an ocean under their own power. They were transported on the decks of larger ships and then launched into the harbors they were assigned to defend.

It happened in Manila Bay.

The A-7 was Marcus's command. He had a crew of twelve men. He was the only officer. The A-7 was not functioning properly. Gasoline fumes persisted in lingering in the hull, making breathing difficult and needing but a spark to insure a major disaster.

A swivel chair admiral ordered Ensign Marcus to take out his dinky little craft for an availability run in the harbor. The record which showed that Marcus protested the order on the ground that his boat was not in condition for service was subsequently lost, but such convenient losses of important papers are common in armies and navies, almost too common, it seems.

And so, orders being orders, Ensign Marcus steered the A-7 for the channel of Manila harbor. They hadn't gone far when it happened. A detonation and a consuming red blast swept the hull and vomited out the hatches, leaving behind twelve twisted, seared bodies—blistered carcasses clad in a few smoldering rags. Only one man escaped. He happened to be standing in the torpedo compartment. By a freak of ventilation the all-consuming tongue of fire passed him without so much as a singe.

One figure rose from the bottom of the hull, where the dying men lay groaning. With sunken eyes and blistered body he fought his way to the bridge, gasping for breath in lungs whose tissue was as dead as a spider's web to which the torch has been applied. He beckoned the one survivor to the engines.

On the bridge plucky little Marcus took his place, a bloated, blackened, hideous scarecrow with the rags of his uniform still smoldering. How he guided the A-7 back alongside her dock before he collapsed medical men can't tell you. Those who knew Marcus will tell you that if he could have held on to consciousness another minute he would have had the grisly human cargo taken from the hull before relinquishing the bridge, for that is the tradition of the sea. But he flickered back to consciousness only once before he died in the Naval hospital with the few of his men who lingered on in torture until the next day.

SAMUEL ALEXANDER WHITE

CANOEMEN OF THE

OVER on the Katchawan, Bruce Dunvegan lifted the flap of a Cree wigwam and knew that the third of his missions was ended. Inside the tepee, Flora MacLeod sat on a pile of rabbit-skin blankets. Black-haired, dark-eyed, she looked like a native queen ruling the lodges. She hugged a child whose blue eyes and white skin bespoke white fathering.

"Sneak!" she exclaimed at sight of him. "Spy! Why have you followed me?"

"Your father, the factor, sent me. He won't have you wife to a Northwest Fur Company man. He is going to give the child his own name."

"Coward!" Flora sent back. "You have twenty voyageurs, and all the men of this camp are away after caribou. You knew that."

"I didn't, but I'm not making trouble with Running Wolf, the chief, and friendly Indians. What has Black Ferguson to do with our hunters?"

"Nothing. He deserted me here."

"Good heavens! Why?"

"On Lake Lemeau, who should we meet but Desirée Lazard, the beauty of Oxford House, with her Uncle Pierre and his men. Desirée, you understand—your own idol. Her loveliness struck

CRIMSON STAR

First of three parts

him blindingly, like the morning sun over the Blood Flats. That night Ferguson and his paddlers left me here and vanished on her trail."

Dunvegan flushed at her reference. "Yet you are legally married to him?" he questioned.

"Yes, Father Merceraux married us. I won't go back for my father's punishment."

"I have to take you."

"Attend to your own business, Bruce Dunvegan. Watch Desirée at the fort. I made trysts in spite of guards and gates. Desirée may, too. For, assuredly, Black Ferguson will try to carry her off."

"I haven't the right," Dunvegan pointed out. "Desirée is a daughter of a Northwester, although her Uncle Pierre is H.B.C. Her father died in the rival service. She cherishes her pride of allegiance and vows she will never marry a Hudson's Bay Company man."

"Change her vow," Flora scoffed. "Next to my father, you're the biggest man in the H.B.C. Look! Here are the Crees back again."

Running Wolf, his son, Three Feathers, and the rest of the bucks dropped over the ridge behind the camp. They had nothing in their hands.

"Left the carrying of the game to the squaws, as usual," deduced Dunvegan.

"No, their caribou hunt has failed. They are in a bad mood. Leave me here. You see—the old fool Running Wolf wants to marry me now."

"I wouldn't want to tell the factor that," observed Bruce, grimly.

He faced the Crees.

"*Bo' jou'*, Running Wolf; *bo' jou'*, Three Feathers."

"*Bo' jou'*, Strong Father," returned the chief.

Three Feathers stared sullenly. He hated Dunvegan, who ruled their trade, and he had a secret ambition of usurping his father's place.

"He has come to steal our women," Three Feathers declared suspiciously.

The chief looked searchingly at Bruce and his brigade.

"Strong Father, you have come from the Stern Father (the factor), at Oxford House, about the white squaw?"

"That's so," admitted Dunvegan.

"*Ae,*" snarled Three Feathers, "a traitor and a foe—"

"You young hot-head," Bruce interrupted, whirling him aside by the arm, "keep out of this."

Three Feathers sprawled on his back among the laughing squaws.

"So," nodded Running Wolf, unmoved, "they learn wisdom. You come to fight the French Hearts (Northwesters)?"

"No, to take the factor's daughter back."

Anger deepened the copper-colored Cree's face.

"Ah-hah! You have turned enemy to my people?" he blazed.

Dunvegan touched the chief on the shoulder.

"Listen! Flora married and bore a son to the factor's bitterest enemy and threw the Northland's mockery in his face. Malcolm MacLeod won't stand that. She has to come back, now Ferguson's gone, and I have to obey the command to take her."

"I understand," responded the Cree. "I see that you came out against Black Ferguson and not against me. Therefore the white squaw shall go to Oxford House, as you say."

"You old fool!" blazed Flora. "You give in?"

"I go, too—to ask Stern Father that you return to my lodge."

As they made ready, Three Feathers and the young bucks massed at the landing. Pete Connear, an American and ex-sailor who had drifted north by the Red River route, ordered them back at Dunvegan's direction.

"Salt rat," Three Feathers sneered, "get away to your Big Waters."

He threw a handful of sand in Connear's eyes, and Pete leaped ashore from the birchbark canoe.

"You bloomin' copper-hide, I'll slipper you and roll you in the scuppers for sailor's luck."

Pete whirled him over, spanked him and shoved him in the river.

The Cree bucks charged. Trade-guns barked. A fight seemed started.

"Stop!" roared Running Wolf.

He appeared from the tepee behind Flora and the child, arrayed in medicine-maker's robes. His medicine-wand waved them back. A fear grew in their eyes. They slouched aside, while the three embarked in Dunvegan's brigade. Running Wolf, Flora and the boy sat amidships. Wahbiscaw was in his place as bowsman. Bruce occupied the stern. The prows pointed up the Katchawan. The paddles dipped in rhythm. Where the rapids proved too swift, they poled the crafts up with long spruce poles.

They traveled in silence in case game was encountered around the many river bends.

But the brigade left the Katchawan without a sight of game and entered the mouth of Lake Lemeau. Maskwa, the Ojibway fort runner, stood erect, sentinel-like, in the canoe behind Dunvegan.

His keen eyes searched the lake waters for sign of friend or foe. Quite suddenly he sat down.

"Canoe, Strong Father," he grunted gutturally.

"Where?" the chief trader asked.

"Below Bear Island."

Quietly Dunvegan shifted his bow till the canoe bore a course which would bring them directly in the path of the strange craft.

He had no idea who it might be.

It might belong to some trapper, or to some Indians of their own Company.

It might belong to the Nor'westers. It might carry free traders. Whatever it was, it was his duty as chief trader to find out.

Warn yellow the bark shone as the distance lessened. Sapphire glints flashed out as the paddles flickered after each plunge. Soon the men of the brigade could see that the craft contained four figures, but it was Maskwa's long-range vision which discerned their nationalities.

"Ojibways, two; white men, two," he announced. "Good paddlers."

And so it proved when they drew near. Dunvegan saw, seated behind the native bowsman, a keen-visaged, lean, athletic man of forty. He had a smooth face, sandy hair, eyes of a cold, hard blue, a beak nose, and great sinewed arms. About him was the stamp of the frontier. Instinctively at first glance the chief trader catalogued him as one who had seen much frontier fighting, who had handled guns and bad men running amuck with guns.

Fit mate for him looked the one sitting toward the stern. He was abnormally broad of shoulder, stocky, powerful, black-bearded, black-eyed. The sun had smoked him till he was swarthy as the Ojibway steersman. Of the two white men he looked the more dangerous, for there was no humor in his steady eyes. His companion's gaze, cold and hard as it was, held something of a quizzical gleam. Perhaps it was the hollows under those eyes that gave him that appearance.

AS DUNVEGAN'S craft met the other almost bow to bow and slipped ahead, the gunwales grated gently. Bruce closed a hand on the gunwale of the other and the two canoes drifted as one.

The sandy-haired man's semi-humorous eyes flashed a quick look aboard, and then he smiled.

"You sure couldn't do that, stranger, if my pardner and me hadn't decided to speak to you," he observed.

"Couldn't I?" challenged Dunvegan. He scrutinized men and outfit. "Free traders, I suppose?"

"Guess again."

"Nor'westers, eh?"

"You got another guess coming yet."

"Oh! quit it, Granger," the black-bearded man broke in, stirring impatiently among the dunnage bags. "You're wasting time. Show him the star."

The sandy-haired one twisted his suspender band. Dunvegan saw the badge of a United States marshal.

"It's genuine, stranger. And we're sure not here for our health. Are we, Garfield?"

"No," growled the black-bearded marshal, "a show-down's the thing we're after."

"You fooled me," laughed Dunvegan. "But you had better exhibit your papers. My factor is death on free traders; and I have to report to him, you know."

"Who's your factor?" the smooth-faced marshal asked as he dived into

the pocket of his buckskin coat that was stuffed under the forward thwart.

"MacLeod, of Oxford House."

"MacLeod, eh? MacLeod!" rumbled Granger while he searched. "Don't know him. But we sure will when we get to his post. We've been up around the Bay forts. When we've done Norway House and the posts out that way, we'll be across to Oxford. See you again, then. Hello! Here's the papers."

He handed Dunvegan two frayed documents. As he scanned them, the chief trader saw they were genuine enough. The first was an order of the chief district factor of the Hudson's Bay Company declaring all forts open to the bearers. The second was a similar mandate of the Northwest Fur Company for use in their posts and issued from the headquarters in Montreal.

"These are through passes," smiled Dunvegan, handing them back. "I know the chief district factor's signature. And it seems you are equipped for a hunt in Nor'west country as well. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"You've done all you can do—let us see yourself and your men," said Granger with a grin. "That's all we wanted, eh, Garfield?"

"That's all," Garfield agreed, condescending to laugh so that his gleaming white teeth split his black beard. "Hit her up there, you bucks," he commanded the Ojibways.

The Indians seized their paddles. Dunvegan let go the gunwales.

"Good luck," he nodded.

"Hold on," yelled Granger suddenly. "Maybe I ought to say more. A hint from you would sure save us some miles. Here, look at this."

He dived again into the buckskin coat and handed a photograph across the water gap.

"Do you know him?" he demanded, keenly reading the chief trader's face. "Mind, I don't say he's what we're after. I don't say he's done anything. Do you know him? He's in the service of one of these fur companies."

The picture Dunvegan looked at was that of a bare-faced man in robust health, a strong man who was in the super-strength of his prime. The eyes were vivid, clear as crystal, sharp as steel. The chief trader felt that the glance of the living original would cut like a knife. These eyes puzzled him with a sense of vague familiarity, but the face he scanned was the face of no one in his memory-gallery.

He shook his head, and oddly enough he felt a reluctance, a disappointment in denial.

"I don't know him," he decided, and handed the photograph back.

Like a hawk Granger had watched his face. He read truth in it.

"Oh! well," he exclaimed whimsically, "the way of the transgressor and the marshal is sure hard."

Once more his quizzical expression flashed forth as he twirled his paddle aloft in good-by.

"Shake, stranger," he threw back in final farewell, while the long craft leaped under the Ojibways' strokes. "Shake. Till I see you at Oxford House."

Flora MacLeod watched the solitary canoe drop away out of sight. Then, when it was gone, she leaned forward to the chief trader's shoulder.

"Was that last answer of yours lie or loyalty?" she asked timidly.

Dunvegan turned a surprised face.

"It was ignorance," he amended.

He saw Flora's cheeks pale, saw her eyes fill with haunting fear.

"What's wrong?" he demanded.

"That picture—I—I saw it, too."

"Well?"

"It was my father's."

DAWN set a wall of flame on Oxford Lake. Out of this solar furnace drifted a fleet of canoes black as charred logs against the cardinal blaze. Clement

Nemaire, sentinel at the stockade gates of Oxford House, caught sight of the craft in the immense distance advancing with a motion which, though scarcely discernible, nevertheless brought them gradually into large perspective.

His black eyes, keen as lenses, steadily watched the approaching flotilla while it breasted Caribou Point and crossed the outer rim of the Bay. When the fleet drew opposite Mooswa Hill, the mighty rampart upon whose crest a brushwood beacon stood always piled ready for firing by the Hudson's Bay fort runners as a warning message of impending Nor'west attacks, Clement made out the sharp, black line of a flagstaff in the bow of the foremost canoe.

From the staff's tip a long standard bellied like a sail in a cross wind, its vivid hue blending with the fiery background, and Nemaire knew the familiar blood-red banner of his company.

"De brigade," he shouted for all the post to hear. "*Hola!* De beeg brigade."

Every soul of Oxford House sprang forth at his cry. In a heterogeneous crowd the people spread to the landing at the lake-shore. White traders, fair-skinned women, full-blooded Indians, halfbreeds, squaws, papooses, huskies, all mingled in polyglot confusion. Curs barked; children squealed; native tongues chattered in many languages. Eager expectancy, intense interest, was the sensation of each human being or animal that waited on the beach. Their wild hearts, keyed to a love of the vast places, to a worship of all the attributes of wilderness life, could never welcome a brigade unmoved. That distinct institution of the Hudson's Bay Company was a thing that they idolized, revered. The crowd in a fever of joyous excitement pressed to the very water's edge and shifted the length of the landing. Each minute of waiting they filled with clamor and gesticulation, the hum of voices growing to a roar as Dunvegan's brigade approached within hailing distance.

But behind them a heavy step sounded on the veranda of the factor's house, and looking, they saw the square-set bulk of Malcolm MacLeod. A husk blanketed the confusion. Not a foot or tongue stirred by the lake-edge. So deep was the stillness that the slight wash of the plunging canoes could be heard distinctly. The factor did not speak, but his bushy eyebrows lowered and the piercing gaze of his steely, black eyes was concentrated on the scene. His iron hands, symbols of the man, gripped the railing tightly. Like the crowd, he waited; but while their impelling motive was curiosity, MacLeod's was judgment.

The fleet of canoes lined for the landing, the figures of the occupants growing clear. The throng could now see that the chief trader and Wahbiscaw, his bowsman, had two passengers in the foremost craft. When they became recognizable as Flora MacLeod and Running Wolf, whispers of wonder and speculation began to circulate. Discussion ran like the murmur of low waters from Father Brochet, the black-cassocked, unobtrusive priest on the outer rim of the gathering, to rude Gaspard Follet, the owl-faced, dwarf-shaped, half-witted fool who sat on the end of the landing with bare feet in the water, that he might be the closest to the incomers.

Conversing in a little group beside Father Brochet stood Desirée Lazard, Pierre her uncle and Basil Dreaulond. As the brigade touched the bank, the rushing people blotted it out. The paddlers leaped ashore, stretched cramped limbs, and were swallowed up in the throng. Presently the mighty figure of Bruce Dunvegan emerged, leading Running Wolf and Flora MacLeod from the landing toward the factor's house.

Contrary to his usual custom, Malcolm MacLeod did not turn into his council room to receive the report and

do his questioning. The fact that the runaway daughter appeared before him accounted for his coming down a few steps to await the trio.

"You've succeeded," he growled unceremoniously, bending his angry glance, not upon the chief trader but upon Flora, who returned a stare of equal intensity.

"Not altogether," complained Dunvegan. "Things are not as clear as I could wish. I found the girl in Running Wolf's lodge. I understand Black Ferguson deserted her near the Cree camp."

MacLeod's habitually active brain seemed slow in comprehending the statement. The tight lines of his mouth relaxed, and his jaws jarred apart in an attitude of sheer amazement.

"Stern Father," Running Wolf hastened to add, "it is my wish and the white squaw's wish that she remain in my lodge. As for the sun and the stars and the south wind is my worship for her. I have come for your consent." He bowed in his brief oratorical delivery and smoothed his medicine-maker's dress.

"Consent! Squaw!" boomed MacLeod, blank astonishment giving way under the swift rush of his tremendous rage. "You Cree demigod—that's my consent." And his strong hands hurled Running Wolf headlong from the veranda steps almost to the rim of the gaping crowd.

The old warrior picked himself up in a frenzy of spirit and, forgetting all traditions and restraints, rushed insanely at the factor. But Dunvegan blocked his path and grasped the uplifted hand.

"Don't do that, Running Wolf," he warned. "You can only work your own ruin. A blow would mean your death."

Chest heaving, eyes blazing, the Cree chieftain strained a moment after his insulter. Dunvegan's strength forced him back and instilled some substance of sanity. When he found his voice, his speech trembled with hate.

"You are Stern Father now," he hissed in Cree, "but I can change it to Soft Father—"

MacLeod took a step forward as if on sudden impulse to crush once for all a defiance flung in his teeth, but he caught the look of entreaty for lenience in the chief trader's eyes. He halted. Yet Running Wolf was not to be appeased. He glared vindictively into the very face of the lord of Oxford House.

"Soft Father, you shall be," he declared. "I go to the French Hearts. We will meet again before many moons. Then my hands shall hurl. My words shall curse. You shall be as the broken pot of clay, as the water of melting ice, as the pool of blood where the big moose falls."

The chief's momentarily lost stoicism was regained. His dignity, which the red man seldom loses, had returned.

Dunvegan, his hands still upon the Cree's arms, felt the change in him, felt

him straighten with pride. He released his grip.

Running Wolf stepped quietly back. "I go," he announced without emotion. "I go, but when the French Hearts are climbing stockades and burning posts about your ears, I will be with them. Then when I have rolled you stiff in your blanket will I take the white squaw to my wigwam."

He whirled at the last word and stalked to the beach. Flora MacLeod looked upon him with eyes that lightened.

"You old fire-eater," she laughed hysterically, "I almost love you for those words." Her glance shifted to Dunvegan who had grasped her arm so that she might not follow the Cree chieftain if she were so inclined. "Don't you?" she asked.

"He is to be admired," the chief trader admitted.

But Malcolm MacLeod swore a fearful oath in which there was no semblance of admiration as they watched Running Wolf glide out upon Oxford Lake in a canoe borrowed from some Crees, formerly of his tribe on the Katchawan.

"Let the cursed traitor go over to the side of the Nor'westers," he cried. "Let him help Black Ferguson and his sneaking dogs. I have no fear of them. I'm not afraid of man or devil. And why should I trouble myself about a picket of ragged Frenchmen? Bah! I can handle them as I handled the Cree. I'm lord of this country. Every man knows it. Every man *must* know it."

As every one at this and all the other northern posts understood, Malcolm MacLeod was ruled by twin passions: pride and hate. He paid homage to no other emotion, idol or deity. Fear could not touch his heart. Love was long ago crushed out. The tentacles of greed never held him. He had no dread of the evil machinations of hell. Neither did he recognize such a thing as Divine Providence. His Bible, that in his half-forgotten past had been fingered nightly, lay upon an unused upper shelf in his council room, sepulchred in twenty years of dust.

Fallen into silent brooding, the factor stared at the disappearing speck upon the vast water, the speck which was Running Wolf and his craft. Dunvegan had to arouse him.

"The woman and the child," he prompted. "What is to be done with them?"

MacLeod wheeled. "See that she gets no canoe to leave the post," was his curt order. "She goes out with Abbé Du Cerne to the nunnery at Montreal before the frost closes in."

Like some fierce interpreter of high-latitude laws he pronounced the judgment, and Flora MacLeod's spirit crumpled under its weight. It came suddenly—this most appalling thing that could happen to a lover of liberty.

CHAPTER II

DESIREE

MALCOLM MacLEOD for the first time in twenty years had entered the chapel, not for the service but for the christening. Dunvegan left the store in charge of his *mètis* clerk and followed.

Was he going for the service? Perhaps, for he was a good man, and his religious creed was not a narrow one. Was he going for the christening? Undoubtedly, for he was to stand sponsor for the child.

But in the depths of his being something cried a third reason.

Across the flat ground which served as the trading-house yard lay the chapel. Roughly built after the fashion of Northern missions, its very ruggedness sug-

gested the strength of the faith for which it stood as a symbol.

As Dunvegan approached the steps, people were filing already through the narrow doorway. A medley of types was there. Acorn-headed squaws pattered in. Morose Indians filed after. Women, children and settlers drifted through the doorway. The Hudson's Bay men slouched over. Trappers and halfbreeds filled the single aisle. At the end of a rough bench in one front corner of the building sat the factor, dour and unyielding. His head was bowed. Not a muscle of his body moved. Perched on the opposite end of that seat was Gaspard Follet, the fool, who had drifted in from nowhere to the post about a year before. It was the fool's delight to go about hearing everything through dog-like ears, seeing everything through owlish eyes.

None could find out who or what he was, or whence he had come. Yet many at Oxford House contended that he was not so simple as he appeared. They declared that he was as wise as themselves and only kept up the sham to get an easy living. In proof of their contention these suspicious ones set forth his glibness of tongue when he pleased, for on occasion he could talk as well as Brochet.

As Dunvegan seated himself not far from Pierre Lazard and his niece, the mass began in solemn intonation.

"*In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti,*" began Father Brochet, the mass book supported where the black cassock bulged over the portly waist.

The clear voice of the clerk answered with sonorous "amens" and the responses rose in chorus.

Dunvegan looked at the factor. The latter seemed unconscious that an earnest service was progressing. Sunk in stony oblivion, he appeared absolutely motionless, his chest neither rising nor falling as he breathed.

The long, familiar service was finally concluded, and those who had taken no part other than as mere listeners sat up with an expectant shuffle. Flora MacLeod moved to the front with her child and stood before the altar. Father Brochet looked down upon her. There was no reproach in his mien. Experience had taught him that in such a case as this women followed their own hearts even to fleeing from their parents.

A hush brooded over the chapel's interior, a sort of awkward silence, a dread of things running awry. The child's whimper broke it, and Flora swayed the boy in her arms to quiet him.

Brochet spoke when she finished, his clear voice carrying to the door and even outside where some late-comers, unable to find seats, were grouped on the slab of rough stone which served as a step.

"Who is the male parent, the father of the child?" he asked in the natural course of the ceremony.

Deep silence reigned. Flora MacLeod's lips closed tightly, indicating that out of stubborness she would not speak the name. People looked at the factor, and he turned from his immobility with the attitude of a sleeping bear suddenly prodded into angry activity.

"Black Ferguson," he snarled, sidling over a foot or so upon the bench.

"The name this child is to bear with honor through life?" Father Brochet continued.

"Honor?" grunted MacLeod. "I don't know about that. No doubt he will inherit the spirit of disobedience from his mother. Call him Charles Ian MacLeod. There will be no Ferguson in it."

A murmur stirred the assemblage at the factor's rude remark, but they dared not add protest to their surprise. Dunvegan, of course, had expected it from the first.

"Who stands as sponsor for this infant?" asked the priest.

MacLeod swung himself half round

and nodded to Dunvegan. Bruce rose to his feet, seeing with surprise that Gaspard, the fool, had also raised himself by jumping upon the seat.

"Who stands sponsor?"

"I," squealed the idiot. "Also, he can have my name, for if the truth came out, it is as good as any one's and—"

He got no further, for old Pierre Lazard pulled the foolish dwarf off his perch, before the angry factor could strike him, and pushed him unceremoniously to the door amid the suppressed chuckles of the assembly.

"Again, who stands sponsor?" inquired the unruffled Father Brochet.

"I do," spoke Dunvegan.

"Do you, Charles Ian MacLeod, renounce the devil, his angels and all their evil works?"

"I do," Dunvegan, as sponsor, replied.

"Do you believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost?"

"I believe."

"It is well," observed Brochet. "We may now proceed with the service of baptism. Behold in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost I baptize you Charles Ian MacLeod. And may the good Lord's mercy lead your feet in honorable paths."

"Amen! Amen! Amen!" rang the responses in many tongues throughout the chapel.

With the chanting of a hymn the people poured forth. Flora disappeared instantly with her child, waiting for no birth offering.

The factor was equally swift in effacing himself from the unfamiliar Mission House. One of his desires had been fulfilled. There remained the other, and the consummation of that one promised to be a harder matter.

DUNVEGAN hastened after Desirée Lazard and overtook her near her uncle's cabin. Pierre himself had gone in ahead.

"Wait a moment, Desirée," he begged. "I want you to promise me something. I'll have no peace till you do. MacLeod has ordered me to build at once the new post on the site I selected—"

"Kamattawa?" she queried.

"Yes. It is to hold the Nor'westers in check."

Desirée smiled.

"The company of my father," she reproved gently.

"Would that there were no need to fight them!" Dunvegan breathed. "Would that I might stay here! But I cannot. And it is torture for me to go with fear and doubt in my mind. I want your solemn promise that this man Ferguson shall have no speech with you."

"Why?" She was looking at him with her head turned sidewise like a saucy bird.

"Why?" Bruce echoed. "Surely you don't mean that. You know what he is. You saw today what he has done. They say he is hard set after you. And your heart should recoil from the very idea. Why? You don't mean it, Desirée. You are not that shallow."

Her eyes suddenly softened.

"Forgive me, Bruce. I was only tormenting you. I promise. I freely promise."

She thrust both hands in his.

Dunvegan's blood leaped at the contact, but he controlled himself.

"That's well, Desirée," he murmured. "That's so much gained. And what I gain I never lose. Perhaps when I come back I may gain still more."

His gaze had a hunger in it. The whole strong manliness of his honest nature was pleading for what she had hitherto denied him. Desirée felt the strength of his passion and lowered her glance.

There were people passing, but foot by foot in her maddening elusiveness Desirée had drawn from the trail till she was hidden behind the outer cabin door which swung half open. Dunvegan.

his shoulders wedged in the opening, tried to read her face.

"In a few days I'll be gone to build Kamattawa," he went on. "Give me some hope before I go. Don't send me away without a shred of encouragement, Desirée."

Wide-eyed she gazed at him. She was flushed, her manner all uncertain. Her breath came quickly. Abruptly she flung out her arms in a swift gesture of pity.

"Bruce," she cried, "it might be some time—if—if things were different."

"How?"

"If you didn't hold so strongly to the Hudson's Bay Company."

Dunvegan stepped back, his lips closed grimly.

"Would you—ever break your allegiance?" Desirée faltered.

"Never while my blood runs."

"Oh, your proud spirit!" she lamented. "And mine as proud! It's no use, Bruce. It's no use."

She sprang up on the steps, but Dunvegan caught her by the arms.

"Don't!" she protested. "There are people passing."

"They can't see," he replied feverishly. "You mustn't go like this without telling me more. Why will you keep this barrier between us?"

"I have vowed I will never wed a man except he be of my own company."

"But why? What is the loyalty of old service to a woman?"

"As much as to a man. Remember every man of the companies was bred of woman. It is a matter of blood. And loyalty to the Northwest Company is in my blood."

Because the feminine soul of her was beyond his understanding, the chief trader was smitten with bitterness and anger.

"And you will forever swear by these Nor'westers?" he demanded. "You will swear by a lot of frontier ruffians herded under the leadership of such a scoundrel as Black Ferguson? Tell me that."

"I must," Desirée answered.

Dunvegan turned on his heel without another word.

But Desirée was flying after him as he reached the trail. Her hand was on his shoulder.

"Bruce," she panted.

He stopped. His face was cold, impassive.

"Well?"

"I must because—my—my father died with them. His spirit is in me."

Both her hands were on his shoulders now. She was very much in earnest, and it hurt her that he should in any way misconstrue her motives.

"There are times," she continued, "when I feel I hate the Hudson's Bay Company and all its servants. But at those times I always have to amend my hatred. Not *all* its servants! Don't you understand?"

She let him fathom her eyes, and he understood. There he caught a gleam of something he had never surprised before. The joy of the discovery ran through him like exultant fire.

He prisoned both the wrists at his shoulders. "Desirée, you care. You care a little."

"Yes," she breathed, and still unwillingly. "I care—a little."

With the partial confession she

wrenched free and rushed blindly indoors.

"Keep your vow till I come home," Dunvegan called after her.

"And after," she teased, once she was safe inside. "You may be away all winter. You may come in a blizzard—who knows?"

CHAPTER III

Lieges Of The Wild

ALONE in his council room, Malcolm MacLeod's black wrath boiled under the powerful insult. He had never seen Black Ferguson, but he promised himself he would soon feast his eyes upon the Nor'wester trussed up in thongs with death confronting him. MacLeod was only biding his time till Dunvegan should build Fort Kamattawa, the new post with which he intended to shut out the Nor'westers from the Katchawan Valley. With Kamattawa as a base, he would wipe Fort La Roche off the district and oust his enemies.

The same possibility was being discussed by Bruce Dunvegan and his men as they smoked their evening pipes in the hazy light of the trading room.

"Give me the least opportunity to strike the Nor'westers in the Valley, and I'll strike hard enough to crush Black Ferguson's fort," the chief trader declared. "When Kamattawa is finished, the factor expects to capture La Roche, but if we ever get a chance in the meantime, we'll take it. Eh, men?"

They nodded grimly. They loved deeds more than words, and Bruce knew they were as eager as himself.

Sandy Stewart, the Lowland Scot, at length broke silence, quitting his pipe long enough to utter a brief sentence.

"We'll no be shuttin' oor eyes as we build, whateffer."

His own gray eyes twinkled craftily through the steel haze of the company's tobacco.

Pete Connear was sprawling in sailor's attitude, his back on a bench, his knees drawn up to his chin. He shifted his legs to speak.

"Why not send a spy among them?" he suggested. "There are lots of strange men in our service who could play the part."

"Too dangerous," commented the chief trader seriously. "Any man who enters an enemy's fort these days is putting his neck in a noose. Moreover it's impossible on both sides. The Nor'westers trust no stranger. Neither do we."

"We trusted yon gossoon Gaspard Follet," put in Terence Burke.

"Bah! He's a fool."

"He talks loike a lawyer whin he plases. I think he's a deep wan."

"It's his idiocy. Gaspard is harmless. You see, they could no more put a spy into Oxford House than we could employ a traitor to mingle in their ranks at La Roche. We must watch for our opening, daylight or dark and catch Black Ferguson dozing. I'd give one thousand castors to lay hands on him right now."

Basil Dreaulond emitted a low chuckle and beat his moccasin with the bowl of his pipe.

"Nobody don' nevaire catch dat man," he observed. "Ferguson mooch too smart; he got de heart lak wan black fox. De fellow w'at goin' get de bes' of heem mus' spik wit' Satan, yes."

"Faith," Burke laughed, "he'd be spakin' wid hisself, 'cause it's the divil in per-rson is me frind Black Ferguson. Oi clapped eyes on him wanst at Montreal."

"What did he look like, Terence?" asked Pete Connear.

Even as the factor, none of the other men had seen the troublesome Nor'wester at close range. The nearest vision they had had of him was in the gunsmoke of

a skirmish or in the semi-darkness of a midnight raid.

"Fair as a Dane, wid the same blue eyes," the Irishman answered.

"Listen till that, would ye?" cried Stewart. "An' why maun they go callin' him Black Ferguson?"

"Hees soul," explained Dreaulond tersely. "Everyt'ing dis man do be black. Tak' more dan wan t'ousand pries' confess heem out of hell."

"Kind of brother to Captain Kidd or a cousin of old Morgan's, eh?" remarked Pete Connear. "Pretty figure to have leading the other side. I'd think the Nor'west Company would put a decent man in charge."

"He's just the sort they want," Dunvegan declared. "They know they're beyond their rights and trespassing on ours. They want a man who will stop at nothing. In Black Ferguson they have him."

Even as Dunvegan finished speaking, a scuffle arose at the door.

"What's that?" the chief trader demanded.

"Sounds like a husky," observed Pete Connear.

They could hear snarling and groaning with now and then a whimper of fear as from a frightened animal.

"No, it's a human voice," declared Dunvegan. He strode across the room and kicked up the latch.

The door swung back swifty and in bounded the weird shape of Gaspard Follet, the little idiot. He dashed forward as if propelled from a catapult, but the chief trader's peremptory voice halted him.

"Stop!" Dunvegan commanded. "What in Rupert's name is the matter with you?"

Gaspard stood speechless. His owlish eyes glared in a perfect frenzy of real or simulated terror, and he hopped from one foot to the other in the center of the floor, hunching his dwarfed shoulders with a horrible, convulsive movement.

For the most part amazed silence struck the men, but Maskwa, the Ojibway fort-runner, regarded Follet with the superstition of his race and jabbered in guttural accents.

"The little fool has seen a god," he asserted in Ojibway. "He has spoken with *Menaubosho.*"

"*Non,*" was Basil Dreaulond's more commonplace explanation. "De mad *giddes* bit heem. Dis Gaspard goin' crazy lak dose yelpin' beas'."

But the chief trader bade them speculate in silence.

"Speak, Follet," he urged. "Take a long breath and you'll get it out. Something's tried your nerves."

"Ah!" gasped the fool between his chattering teeth. "I have been frightened.

He crossed himself a score of times and shut out an imaginary vision by holding claw-like fingers before his great, staring eyes.

"Speak out," ordered Dunvegan sternly. "Where have you been all day? I haven't seen you since Pierre Lazard put you out of the Mission House this morning."

"In the Black Forest," answered the dwarf. "I went in a canoe to be alone, for they put me out of the chapel. Who was it? Oh! yes, old Pierre. I will remember that. I went in a canoe and I saw a devil."

"What was it?" asked Bruce, smiling.

"I—I forget." Gaspard beat his forehead in a vain attempt at recollection.

The chief trader was well acquainted with the fool's frequent pilgrimages here and there, his harmless adventure, his constant lapses of memory. Where others sometimes doubted, he believed Follet's imbecility was genuine. Else why was it kept up?

"You had better do your wandering within the stockades," he advised. "The woods aren't altogether safe for pleasure jaunts."

"Who would harm a silly head?" mumbled Gaspard.

"That's no protection. Your head might be taken off first and its sanity inquired into afterward. That's a peculiar habit these roaming Northwesters have."

"The Nor'westers!" echoed Gaspard Follet, in a strident scream, his whole face lighting with the gleam of certain knowledge born of suggestion. "One of them was the devil I saw in the Black Forest in the winter cabin. Name of the Virgin, how he frightened me! Now I remember well. It was the worst of them all. Any of you would have run as I did. Don't tell me you wouldn't. Ferguson sits in yon cabin."

The floor shook with the spring of the men to their feet. Dunvegan had instantly leaped the length of the room and lifted the dwarf in his hands, shaking him to search out the truth of his statement.

"Do you lie?" he cried tensely. "Speak. Is this an idiot's fancy?"

Gaspard wriggled. His face no longer bore vacancy of expression. The flush of real intelligence mantled it.

"No, by the cross," he vowed. "I speak truth. I know what I saw. If you think I lie, take me there. Should the black Nor'wester not sit in the cabin as I say, you may kill me."

Because Gaspard Follet was above all things a coward, this offer forced immediate conviction upon the group. As the chief trader set the fool upon his feet, he turned and saw Malcolm MacLeod's form bulking broad in the doorway.

"You have heard?"

"I have heard." The factor's tone boomed out, savage, exultant. The order that followed was given with a swiftness as sinister as it was explicit.

"Take a dozen men," he directed briefly. "Bring me the Nor'wester, living or dead. You understand?" Again he spaced the words for them: "Living —or—dead!"

Clement Nemaire swung wide the stockade gates. Bearing a forty-foot fur canoe, Dunvegan and his men filed out on their mission. The entrance closed behind their mysterious going.

"*Bon fortune,*" whispered Nemaire.

A DEEPER blot within the shadow which the headland cast upon the water, Dunvegan's craft silently rounded Caribou Point, beached softly upon the sand in the granite-walled cove, and spilled its crew into the aisles of the Black Forest. Beyond rose the craggy ridge called Mooswa Hill, a landmark to the Hudson's Bay men in times of quiet, a pillar of fire when the Nor'westers struck.

The winter cabin of Gaspard Follet had mentioned stood on a rock shoulder above the cove. Pine and spruce crowded it. In springtime the shore ice jammed to its threshold. The ooze and the drip of the years were insidiously working its ruin. But still the halfbreeds and the voyageurs sometimes used it for a night's shelter on their journeys. Once it had saved the life of Basil Dreaulond in a great blizzard. Exhausted, he had reached it when he could never have made the remaining three miles to Oxford House.

A neck of the Black Forest hugged the incline where the hut stood. Marshy beaver meadows, fringing the Bay, hedged the timber line, spreading across to Mooswa Ridge and giving no solid footing except what was afforded by a dam traversing the black water. This ridge fell away gradually to where Oxford House was reared, but reaching the Hudson's Bay post by land was precarious business in the dark, for no bridge, other than that which the beavers had built, spanned the morass. Hence the chief trader with his band had elected to come by water.

Very warily they emerged from the shelter of the tree-boles into the clearing where the cabin rested.

"Lie down," commanded Dunvegan, in a whisper. "And go slow. The fellow may have friends with him."

They disappeared at once among the rock ferns, worming noiselessly upon their faces toward the rough log shelter. The chinks of the logs streamed candle-light, but no sound came from within. The night seemed holding its breath. The intense stillness was broken only by the leap of the muskalonge on the distant bars and the rubbing of elbows in the ferny brake.

At the cabin's corner the chief trader touched three of his followers upon their shoulders. Immediately they obeyed his unspoken command, slipping cat-footed around the hut, one to the back, one to either side. Possessed of a sudden, sardonic humor, Dunvegan stooped and whispered in the ear of the dwarf whom they had taken at his word and brought along.

"Will you go in first?" he questioned, playing upon Gaspard's cowardly spirit.

The fool shuddered and shied. Stifling a laugh, the chief trader thrust him to the rear of the line. His heavy kick flung the door back, and he leaped swiftly inside. The hut had an occupant. He rose from a block seat at the sudden intrusion, striding uncertainly to the center of the floor. Neither man spoke. Dunvegan's followers trooped in.

The chief trader's glance searched out the stranger's armament, the rifle in the corner, the belt of pistols on the rude table. The pistols Dunvegan threw down at the butt of the leaning rifle. Then he whirled the table itself across that corner of the room, cutting off access to the weapons, and sat upon it. The tall, sturdily-built fellow watched him, unmoved. His crafty blue eyes never wavered. He seemed conscious of no immediate danger.

"*Bon soir,*" he spoke finally, giving them the greeting of the North with a southern accent.

"It's not good," returned Dunvegan curtly. "This is the worst night you ever struck in all your bad nights, Mr. Ferguson."

"Ferguson!" echoed the other in feigned surprise. Then he laughed cheerfully. "That isn't my name, and I'm not a Nor'wester. I'm a Free Trader from the South. A Yank, if you must know—from Vermont. I'll get out now that the company has spotted me. I have some regard for my pelt. Come, act square with me. The H.B.C. always gives a man a chance. It's the first offense, you know. I'll turn my canoe south on the minute."

"Hardly," replied the chief trader coldly. "There's some one waiting for you at Oxford House. You will not go far—if I am any judge of the factor's designs."

He folded his arms and swung his legs comfortably under the table.

To the fool, he added:

"Gaspard, is this the same person you saw?"

"By the Virgin, yes," quavered Follet, and hid himself behind Connear's bowed legs between which there was vision enough for his immediate needs.

"'Tis that devil of a Black Ferguson," the idiot piped from his vantage ground. "He frightened me; he frightened me." Breaking into a foolish habit of improvising rhymes, he shrieked:

"The devil's kin; the devil's son;
And all the devils rolled into one!"

Dunvegan silenced him with a word and addressed the Irishman.

"Burke," he asked, "can you corroborate this poor fool's statement? We want the right man. The factor won't forgive any blundering."

"Fair as a Dane wid the same blue eyes! It's him. It's Black Ferguson."

"Do I look black?" demanded the baited man angrily.

"We no be see you on de inside," was

Basil's swift answer.

"I'm from the South," persisted the object of their quest, turning to Bruce. "A free trader, I tell you." His gestures were of irritation.

Dunvegan smiled a cold, triumphant smile. He delighted in the loss of his enemy's cool demeanor, in the failure of his self-possession.

"Ferguson," he began, "you're a weak liar. Your accent betrays you. We have you identified to our satisfaction, and your next interview will be with MacLeod. I warn you that this meeting with the factor may be your last and only one, so carry yourself accordingly."

Dunvegan broke off, waving an arm to his band.

"Bind him," he added.

The Hudson's Bay men closed in, but Black Ferguson fell back, a defiant sneer on his handsome face directed at the chief trader.

"One minute," he parleyed insolently. "What's your name?"

"Bruce Dunvegan."

"I've heard of you," Ferguson sneered.

"Perhaps," chuckled the chief trader. "Most Nor'westers have. But I wouldn't advise you to resist my men unless you want to get roughly handled."

"I've heard of you," the other repeated tauntingly, "heard of you as one of the Company's bravest. Is this how you show your courage? You have one, two, three—nine, without counting the dwarf. And you spring upon a solitary man. Dunvegan, you're a coward."

Before Dunvegan had felt the depressing gloom of the Nor'wester's shadow. Now he felt the flaming insult of the Nor'wester's flesh.

Under that insult his blood stung as under the stroke of a dog-whip. The scintillating fire grew in his darkened eyes. His teeth gleamed white between his drawn lips.

"Back, men," was his snarling command. "I never asked you to do what I'm afraid to do myself."

He leaped from the table and strode across to his enemy.

Black Ferguson stood perfectly still till Dunvegan was almost upon him. Then he plunged low with a wolf-like spring. What grip the Nor'wester took the other men never knew, but they saw the chief trader's big form whirled in the air under the tremendous leverage of some arm-and-leg hold. When he came down, Dunvegan was flat on his face upon the floor. Black Ferguson sat astride his back, pinning the chief trader's arms to the planks.

"You're quite helpless," Ferguson cried, laughing at his adversary and sneering at the circle of amazed men. "That's a wrestler's trick. I learned it in—in Vermont. What'll you do about it? I fancy—"

A grip of iron on his throat killed the the words. Ferguson gurgled and twisted his head, casting his eyes down to see whose hands held him. But there were no hands. Dunvegan had swept his muscular legs up over his back and crossed them in an unbreakable hold about the Nor'wester's neck.

Like lightning he swung them down with all the power of his sinewy body. Torn from his momentary position as the upper dog, Black Ferguson crashed to the floor. His head seemed nearly wrenched off. His breath was hammered out. Dunvegan crouched on his chest, choking him into submission, but even in this strait he had voice enough to spring his big surprise.

"La Roche! La Roche!" he roared in a gasping shriek which sounded more like the desperate death rattle in some wild throat than a human call. "To me, comrades. To me."

Something dashed out the candlelight. A gun roared in the doorway. The cabin rocked under a powerful assault. It all came in a whirl that dazed Dunvegan's brain. He heard the chug of bullets through the rotten logs, the shouts of his men, the battle cry of the rushing

Nor'westers who had been craftily lying in wait.

"Confound you!" he cried to his prostrate antagonist. "This is your trap."

In a flash he understood that Ferguson had got wind of their coming and laid a trap for them. Dunvegan's force was in his power, and Oxford House would be an easy prey. And Desirée Lazard an easier prey still! A madness seized Dunvegan. He vowed that Black Ferguson should pay the penalty. His fingers closed on the man's windpipe, but a falling beam hit him on the shoulder, hurling him away from his enemy and halfway through the door amid the rush of feet. There was little return shooting till Dunvegan squirmed into the open. Then he began it with his pistols, leading a dash for the canoe and shouting the Hudson's Bay cry.

Their guns belching fire across the dark, the hardy band zigzagged among the trees, covering their retreat to the cove with a rattling fusillade that kept the pursuing Nor'westers at a distance. Connear and Burke ran knee-deep into the water with the big craft. Gaspard Follet was the first to leap in, but he sank clean through the bottom with a howl of dismay. Like a dripping rag they pulled him out, and Connear completely exhausted his store of sailor's slang.

"Silence," ordered Dunvegan sharply. "What's wrong with you there?" The Nor'westers were shooting from the incline above the cove and their bullets spat in the water.

"Hole in her big as a bucket," Connear growled. "We're caught in a trap, and those blasted Nor'west lubbers know it."

It seemed that the enemy had worsted them at every turn. The lake offered no means of escape, neither did the morass, and the Nor'westers held the slope. Dunvegan wondered why they had so easily

fought their way to the canoe. Now he knew the reason.

The Nor'west leader thought he had them hemmed in, that their extermination was already a decided fact. Then would come his surprise of Oxford House. The scoundrel was brainy, without a doubt. His ruse had been clever. But he had forgotten one thing—the topography of the country. There was a way out other than that up the incline and over the muzzles of the Nor'west rifles. The path lay across the black morass which ringed the Bay, and Dunvegan knew that path.

"Are we all here?" he asked suddenly of his men.

"All but Michael Barreau and Gray Eagle," Connear answered. "Some one caved in Michael's head with a gun stock. Gray Eagle was shot—I saw him fall. And old Running Wolf fired the shot."

"The Cree joined them, eh? I expected that. Where's Maskwa?"

"Here, Strong Father," called the Ojibway fort-runner. "What is your will?"

"You know the beaver dam, the wall across the meadows?" Dunvegan inquired. "You remember it, the new dam we found some moons ago?"

"I remember well," Maskwa answered solemnly. "Did not Strong Father carry me over that—"

"Never mind," the chief trader interrupted hastily. "If you remember the place, lead these men to it. When you get across, hurry up Mooswa Hill and light the beacon. I'll come last. Now, then, all together with the guns. Give them a good volley to make them think we are preparing to storm. Then slip away."

The fusillade boomed and roared. Return volleys belched out. Oxford Lake rumbled and quaked with a million echoes. Like heavy artillery the black powder thundered. Then dead silence fell. Expecting instant attack, the Nor'westers lay close, but the inaction continuing, their scout worked down close to the beach and found it deserted. At that moment Dunvegan's file was crossing the long beaver dam.

The Hudson's Bay men had their guns slung to their backs. All except Maskwa and the chief traders carried long poles in their hands, with which they saved themselves when they missed their footing and sank to the armpits in the rubbish of the structure.

Maskwa was leading the line. Pete Connear walked next. When they had reached the solid ridge and were waiting for the others, Connear poked the Ojibway's muscled back.

"What's that yarn you started to tell back there about bein' carried over this rickety dam?" he asked.

"The day of the great wind three moons ago," began Maskwa, unemotionally, "Strong Father upset with me in my canoe out in the big waters beyond Caribou Point. I took the bad medicine, the cramp, and the lake spirits nearly had me. But Strong Father swam out with me, pumped my breath back, and carried me over the dam of the little wise ones to the Company's post, for our canoe was in pieces on the rocks. Strong Father will not talk about it."

"By—the—sailors'—stars!" exclaimed Pete Connear slowly. Then he whistled siren fashion in failure of further speech, while the tall Ojibway bounded like a spikehorn up the Mooswa Hill.

When the last of Dunvegan's men had crossed the bridge built by nature's children, swift Maskwa had accomplished his mission. As they ran down the ridge toward the post, the beacon flamed, a pillar of fire, against the dark sky.

On through the stockade gates under Nemaire's challenge they sped. And the Hudson's Bay stronghold shook itself into ready defense at Dunvegan's news. But although they lay upon their arms, no attack came. Ferguson's intent had miscarried.

Yet the surprises of the night were not done. When MacLeod made search for his daughter to see if she could throw any light on recent Nor'west movements, he found her gone and his own canoe missing from the landing.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAUSE INVINCIBLE

SEPTEMBER smiled through the scarlet curtains of the moose maples upon Dunvegan's arrival in the Katchawan Valley. October glared through the bare lattice work of the branches at the upstanding walls of trading, store and blockhouse. November swept wrathfully down the open forest lanes, blustering a frosty challenge to the hive of men toiling at the roofing over, the gabling in, the palisading.

But the challenge rang too late. Kamattawa's stockades grinned back undaunted. Behind them crouched the broad-bulked buildings, weather-proof, grim, impregnable alike to destructive elements and predatory foes.

There still remained the finer inside work: the flooring, the shelving the compartment shaping, the counter making for the trading room, the stairs of the same and the grill in the supply loft above. But all this could be accomplished with comparative luxury in the warmth of the fireplaces whose birch flames crackled defiance to the cold.

The incidents of the Hudson's Bay men's journey to the valley and the log of events during the post's building stand in bold orthography upon the daybook of the Fort. One hundred spacious pages the story covers. And because Bruce Dunvegan was not given to write of trifles, the sheets claim a sequence of bold facts which prompt the imagination with the allurement of boundless suggestion.

For instance, there is a line telling that they encountered a squall on Trout Lake. But the yellow paper says nothing of how for hours they bucked the monstrous seas which broke over the canoe bows till each bailer's muscles cramped under the strain of clearing shipped water, or how the craft, sliding meteor-like down the passed surge crests, slapped and pounded in the wave troughs till the bottoms broke in rents and the daring crews won the shore race with death by a scant paddle's stroke.

Likewise a brief obituary states that Gabriel Fonderel was killed in a skirmish with some of Running Wolf's tribe at the Channel du Loup. Yet there is no word of how the now hostile Crees, strong in numbers and led by the fiery Three Feathers, held back Dunvegan's men for four days till finally the chief trader ran the rocky passage in the dark beneath a vicious fire that wounded a half-dozen voyageurs besides snuffing out Fonderel's breath.

Two burnings of unfinished palisades by stealthy enemies; three night attacks by combined bodies of Nor'westers and Running Wolf's Crees; the finding of a full powder bag standing among the flour sacks drying before the fire—all these were mildly noted.

But between the brief lines of the daybook which reposed upon Dunvegan's desk in the trading room of Fort Kamattawa could be read the whole round of a virile, courageous existence; could be felt the pulse of danger and hidden menace; could be witnessed the keen drama of the inimical wilderness conflict. Crowded into these lines there was no cognizance of restraining limits to this or that undertaking.

Theirs were the herculean things, the endless creations, the hot ambitions. Out of the vast resources of the Northland they established a well-defined era, a cycle of supremacy, an epoch of undying history which would round out their full conquest of the land.

The powerful instruments of their

healthy bodies were applied by the shrewdness of their concentrated minds, guarded always by the blessings of sane leadership. Through his wise counsels Bruce Dunvegan conserved the powers of his retainers and turned them along the required channels, directing brain and sinew, blood and spirits, to the profit of the Ancient and Honorable Company.

Over every part of the Fort hung his rigid and progressive discipline. At daybreak all the post Indians, the voyageurs, the H.B.C. servants were engaged upon their various tasks, fashioning, constructing, finishing. They labored with care, but with the merriest of dispositions. At seven they breakfasted. In an hour the hum of work rose again. Leisure could wait for the deep winter snows.

Outside the trading room a great flagstaff was reared before the ground froze too solidly. Up the pine stick ran the Company's crimson ensign, marking another step of conquest, flinging defiance to the Nor'westers, shutting out the stronghold of Fort La Roche from the Katchawan Valley.

Tumultuous cheering greeted the first flap of the banner. Shouts more sincere than patriotic cries rang out loudly. The company's adherents but voiced their allegiance.

"*Vive la Compagnie!*" exulted the impetuous Baptiste Verenne, a typical voyageur.

"*Grace à Dieu!*" pealed his comrades stridently. "*Grace à Dieu!*" Like some wild orison to an invisible god—the company god it might be—their musical tongues chanted the phrase.

Could the Nor'westers have seen these outland sons thus greet their flag, chests big with the emotional breath of love, cheeks bright with the inspiring blood that comes of proud prestige, eyes burning with the fire of eternal loyalty, they would have stopped to think. Could Black Ferguson have witnessed the scene, he would have understood that he was combating not iron determination alone, not reckless strength, not unswerving pertinacity, but a stern faith in a power so vast as to be almost beyond comprehension, a belief in a precedence dominant and complete, a love of the ideal which even death could not conquer because it extended beyond through that exalted medium of heroism. And where the ideal was raised to the clear eye of faith rested the cause invincible.

AS AN auspicious omen in Kamattawa, Indian summer came down with its fragrant sigh and its transient flash of yellow radiance. Then the winds fell strangely mute. Some unseen magic permeated the calm. Earth and air lay breathless with the prophecy of change.

A little cold caress on his tanned cheek, a tang on his lips, a familiar tingle in his sinews foretold the prophecy's fulfillment to Verenne as he sauntered in one night from his trail-blazing. He inspected the sullen sky a moment and shook his head as he strode through the gates to the blockhouse.

"Wintaire," he announced briefly to Dunvegan. "She be comin' *vite* on de *nord* wind, *M'sieu'*."

The chief trader tilted his browned face skyward and clutched the air tentatively to get the feel of the weather.

"Not far off! Not far off, Baptiste!" he calculated. "It may close in any night, and we'll see a white world when we wake of a morning."

Verenne's arm slanted, pointing over the palisades.

"See dat?" he cried.

A circling wind, the first of many days, eddied the leaves lying against the stockade, piled them in a wreath thirty feet high in the air with a gentle motion peculiarly distinctive to a close observer, then ruthlessly disintegrated the whole.

"An' dat?" Baptiste added.

A whizzing phalanx of wild geese blurred the distant horizon, bored like a

rocket from sky to sky, and pierced the invisible distance.

"W'en dey fly dat way," averred Baptiste, "de wintaire right on deir tails. She be come *toute suite*, M'sieu'."

And it did. A greasy wrack of clouds masked the sunset. The north wind blew out of the arctic circle with a humming like vibrating wires. The wrath of desolation went eerily shrieking round and round. Then out of inky space the snow came down, driving fiercely on a forty-mile gale to smother the gauntness of the rugged forest in a swirl of white. For thirty-six hours the frozen flakes pelted the stout stockades. The snow lay in foamy levels in the timber, ten feet deep in the hollows, and wind-packed to tremendous hardness on the ice-bound lakes and rivers.

The days became less strenuous now in Fort Kamattawa. The nights grew long. The Hudson's Bay men attended to their winter needs and equipments, while the post Indians fashioned snowshoes with native quickness and skill.

There came a brief, cold, sleety rain which settled the drifts and the subsequent hard frosts formed a crust that made excellent tripping on the raquettes. The first tripper over the trail was Basil Dreaulond, carrying Company dispatches on his way to Nelson House. He lurched in one night in the midst of a whistling storm with his dog team and a halfbreed assistant. The world outside the Fort was a shrieking maelstrom of snow and cutting blasts. Inside, the men sat close together about the roaring fireplace.

So blinding was the tempest that Kamattawa's sentinel in the block-house tower could see nothing from his frosted windows and did not mark the courier's approach till Basil and the breed were hammering upon the closed gates with their rifle-butts. Eugene Demorel slid back the shutter in the watchtower and leaned out, his gun trained on the entrance.

"De password," he bellowed. "Who comes dere?"

"Nevaire mind de password," roared Basil, who was half frozen. "I'm Dreaulond. Open dis gate queeck."

On the inferno of the elements his words puffed up like faint echoes, but Eugene Demorel knew the courier's tone. The stockade opened for a second, a raging snowgap in the draught. Basil stumbled into the log store.

"*Holà, camarade,*" they greeted joyously. "How do you like the weather?"

"*Mauvais,*" groaned Dreaulond, leaning toward the flames. "She be cold."

Dunvegan took the papers MacLeod had sent to him and read them. They concerned ordinary matters of fort routine and gave him no news of the home post.

"How is everything at Oxford House, Basil?" he inquired with ill-concealed eagerness.

"Everyt'ing be quiet," returned the

courier. "De Nor'westaires don' move mooch."

His eyes, however, held a hint of private information, and the chief trader did not miss the glance.

"Come to the trading room when you get warmed, Dreaulond," he requested. "I'd like to see you."

"*Oui,*" assented Basil, "w'en I get dis cold out ma bones."

From his desk Dunvegan glanced steadily at the courier.

"No letter, Basil?" He bit his lip on the question.

"*Non,*" replied his friend. "I'm sorry, me."

"Something's wrong," blurted the chief trader. "Tell me what it is. Has the Nor'wester had speech with Desirée?" Dunvegan's voice was strained, his fingers clenched white on the wood of the desk.

"Not dat," Basil explained awkwardly. "De dangaire be in anodder quartaire. Desirée an' dis Edwin Glyndon, dey together mooch—ver' mooch. All de autumn taim dey canoe, dey walk, dey spik alone. Dat be not ma beezness. *Vraiment,* dat none of ma affair. *Mais,* I t'ink you want to know, mebbe, an' I be tell you w'at I see. Dey togedder all de taim."

Dreaulond stepped to the door. His actions, like his sentences, were brief and full of significance. The chief trader's voice followed him, an odd, low tone the courier had never heard him use.

"Thank you, Basil," was his only comment. "Thank you for that information."

Alone, he strode immediately into the darkness of his sleeping apartment where he walked the floor, brooding gloomily. Dawn heard his footsteps still falling.

THREE days after Dreaulond's departure for Nelson House, Maskwa, the swiftest fort runner in the service, dashed over the bluffs, springing madly on his long, webbed running shoes. He had outdistanced the trio of breeds following with three dog teams, and he pushed dispatches of importance into Dunvegan's hands.

"Half our number leave tomorrow for Oxford House," the chief trader announced to his retainers as he read. "Men from two of the Nor'west posts, Fort Brondel and Fort Dumarge, have sacked our fur trains from the Shamattawa and the Wokattiwagan. The factor will go to raze Fort Dumarge. We outfit at Oxford House and move against Fort Brondel."

A cheer hit the rafters. Unprecedented activity followed. The breeds blew in with the exhausted *giddés.* Recuperation came to these Company dogs with the night's rest, and into the bitter dawn they were haled. The cold struck nippingly at bare fingers that loaded arms and traveling necessities on the sledges, lashed the moosehide covers over the provender, and tied the stubborn babiche knots. Likewise the frost squeezed the hands that harnessed the dogs. The huskies themselves whined and stirred uneasily in the cold. They were eager for the rush that would make their blood run warm.

Those of the fort who were to stay behind helped in the work. Long practice and consummate skill accomplished starting preparations in the shortest possible time. The dog teams sprang through the gateway at the release, and a shout of farewell thundered.

"*Bonheur, camarades!*" was the word.

"*A Dieu! A Dieu!*"

"*Pour* Shamattawa! *Pour* Wokattiwagan!" rang the responses from the loyal Hudson's Bay men.

"*Marche! Marche!*" called the breeds to the *giddés,* and the cavalcade swung over the long trail.

(To be continued.)

A Gringo Bull-Fighter

By OWEN ATKINSON

"MEXICO for Mexicans! We want no *gringo* bull-fighters here."

The Café Madrin, which is on the Calle López in Mexico City, became very quiet. It was here that bull-fighters and their *cuadrillas* gathered to drink and gossip. All eyes in the crowded cafe were fixed on Jim Hannon, the tall, lean, sun-dried young American who sat with his friend, Gabino, the *banderillero*, a squat, broad-shouldered Mexican with a deep horn wound running from nose to right ear. At the next table, Liborio Ruiz, the famous Mexican bull-fighter, and members of his *cuadrilla* lounged with insolent indifference.

Ruiz had turned in his chair so that his handsome, dissipated face was in profile to Hannon.

"This *gringo* who calls himself Don Jaime," he said in a voice like tearing silk, "he sets himself up as a *torero* after a few fights in the provinces and would compete with me on Sunday. Pah, what an egotist!"

"Do not regard him," hissed Gabino. "He would start a fight here. Ruiz is jealous of you, Don Jaime. He saw you fight at Guadalajara and fears that you will succeed in Mexico City. A fight in a café, a knife in the ribs, and you will not fight bulls for a long time."

Jim Hannon grinned and slouched back in his chair, long legs outthrust, capable brown hands deep in his pockets. "Reckon I can take care of myself," he drawled. "Haven't been running bulls in every small town in Mexico for the past two years without learning a lot besides how to avoid the horns."

"*Madre de Dios*," gasped Gabino. "Ruiz comes to our table. Contain yourself, Don Jaime."

Liborio Ruiz came swaggering across the café. He was not tall, but compactly built. His skin was a smooth brown, his black hair glistened with oil. He was smiling, a cruel, thin-lipped smile disclosing even, white teeth. Deliberately, he leaned over Hannon's table, resting his knuckles on the polished wood. When he spoke, his voice was oily.

"You are not popular in Mexico, Don Jaime. For your health, leave at once. Mexico has many fine bull-fighters. We do not need an *Americano* in our profession."

"But I'm already in the profession," Hannon replied easily. "And there are plenty bulls in Mexico. Enough for both of us. I intend to fight on Sunday, Ruiz."

Ruiz leaned closer, his eyes glittering pinpoints. "A warning is enough for a wise man," he said softly. "If you fight next Sunday it will be for the last time. I have many friends in Mexico, *companero*."

Hannon shrugged. "I don't bluff worth a damn, Ruiz."

"The impresario, Señor del Hierro has arranged for Don Jaime to fight," protested Gabino hurriedly. "We cannot break the contract now."

"You know who I am," muttered Ruiz darkly. "I want no *gringo* in the ring with me on Sunday. There is already too much talk of Don Jaime. How he worked with the spotted bull at Mazatlan, how he handled the sword at Juarez. Get out of Mexico, Don Jaime, or—"

With a jerk Gabino's chair was pulled suddenly from under him, tumbling him across the floor. The overhead lights blinked out, leaving a single blue bulb burning over the bar. A body crashed into Hannon but he caught his balance and hit out furiously. There were cries of "No *gringo!* Get out *Americano!*" From beneath a pile of squirming men, Gabino yelled, "Help, Don Jaime. These *mozos* will murder me."

Hannon dived forward, punching brown faces as he went. His boots thudded against ribs as he cleared the tangle about his friend. The little man staggered to his feet, backed against a wall.

A brown face twisted with hatred loomed up before Hannon and he struck out a long, lashing blow from the shoulder. The face disappeared in a smear of blood. Hannon leapt across the fallen body, caught the next man by the shoulder and spun him around, smashing him on the jaw before the fellow could throw up his guard.

"Ole! Ole!" howled Gabino. Seizing a bottle from the nearest table, he hurled it at an assailant. The bottle broke with a magnificent crash. One of the men Hannon had knocked down struggled to his feet. A knife flashed in his hand. He shot forward, crouching low, the blade aimed for the groin. Hannon side-stepped, chopped down with his right fist, catching the man behind the ear and he fell.

Then the bartender arrived, swinging a short wooden club. Uproar was in the café. Men shouted—and fought to get out of the way of the hammering club.

"Police!" The cry ripped through the place like an alarm bell. Khaki-clad men appeared in the open doorway, came charging forward—

The fight was suddenly over.

Gabino plucked Hannon's sleeve. "This way, Don Jaime. *Vamos."* A door in the rear of the café banged open. Hannon was pushed through and found himself in a dark and dirty street, the puffing Gabino beside him.

"Por Dios," Gabino panted. "I thought we were gone ones that time. Ruiz is like a tiger. In and out of the ring he is a killer."

"Forget it," snapped Hannon. "We fight Sunday and Ruiz can't stop us."

"But to be sure," agreed Gabino resignedly. "You are not afraid of man or bull. But Ruiz is something to worry about. If you fight, he will always be an enemy. He will never rest until a bad accident has happened to you. But come, we go to the hotel of a cousin of mine, a great *aficionado.* He will put us up on the strength of our contract."

THE STREETS were empty. Most of the street lights had been turned off, for Mexico City goes to bed early. Outside of the cafés there is no night life. The air was crisp, icy from the wind blowing down from the snowcapped volcano. Hannon and Gabino walked rapidly, their footsteps sharp and metallic on the pavement.

Gabino made a soft whistling noise through his teeth.

"Look out," he warned. "Big car coming up behind us. It may be Ruiz. Back against the wall."

A black limousine with a long, low hood slid up to the curbing and stopped noiselessly.

"Politico," he guessed. Gabino under

his breath said: "Only *politicos* can afford to ride in sixteen-cylinder cars in Mexico. *Madre de Dios,* what is it now?"

The rear door sprang open and two men climbed out of the car. To Hannon's relief, he saw that one was Alejandro del Hierro, the *impresario.* The other was a big man dressed all in black. He held himself with a certain swaggering authority.

"It is Manuel Moreno," gasped Gabino in awe. "Right hand to *El Presidente.*

Moreno greeted them pleasantly.

"*Buenas noches, Señores.* My friend, del Hierro, informs me that you are to fight in the bull-fight on Sunday. Good, I have a little business for you. Or should I say, perhaps we can do business together?"

"*Si, si,*" spluttered Gabino happily.

"What kind of business?" demanded Hannon.

Moreno smiled and nodded briefly at del Hierro. He swung to the American and his face went hard.

"This Ruiz," he barked, "is no friend of mine. My young daughter has fallen in love with him. And Ruiz has boasted in the cafes that he will elope with her. That pig, my son-in-law? Never! My daughter is a very silly child, you understand, and would soon forget him. If he should receive a bad *cornada* in the ring and be forced to spend six months in the hospital— You have lived in Mexico, *Señor* Hannon, and will understand how I feel about this."

"What am I supposed to do?" asked Hannon gruffly. "Run a sword through Ruiz instead of the bull?"

"You are a brave man, a clever man," cut in del Hierro. "Accidents can happen in the ring. A flick of the cape to attract the bull's eye while Ruiz is working with him. Or perhaps you are slow to make the *quite* when Ruiz has finished a series of passes."

"Suppose there is an accident?" drawlingly asked Hannon, admitting or denying nothing.

"You wish to stay in Mexico?" Moreno asked blandly. "The new labor laws are very strict. You have started a fine career as a *torero*—but you are a foreigner. It may be necessary to forbid you to practice your profession here. But of course, friends of the government do not get into difficulty."

Hannon understood perfectly. And he hadn't spent most of his life in Mexico without knowing that the *politico* meant exactly what he said. If Hannon didn't cause an accident for Ruiz in the ring, Moreno would be another enemy added to the list. And Moreno was all-powerful. "Right hand to *El Presidente*" Gabino had said of him. He could do anything he liked and get away with it. Hannon would be seized, accused of violating the new labor laws, thrown into prison. And there he would stay until Moreno chose to have him brought to trial. A year perhaps, ten years. Hannon had heard of similar cases.

"*Ay, ay, ay,*" cried Gabino eagerly. "*Si, caballeros.* Don Jaime is a sensible man. He will do what is expected of him, you may be sure of that."

"Very well," agreed Moreno turning toward the car. "This business remains among ourselves, of course. Until Sunday then—and I will occupy a box at the ring. We shall see what happens on Sunday."

At the hotel of Gabino's cousin, Hannon was made welcome. When it was learned that he was to fight in the same ring with Ruiz, nothing was too good for him. Later, in their rooms, Hannon discussed the situation with Gabino.

"So our *politico* friend wants me to do his killing for him, eh? Why doesn't he hire a couple of thugs?"

"But that would be impossible," cried Gabino, horrified. "Everybody knows of Ruiz' boast that he will marry Moreno's daughter. So you see, if anything happens to the fighter outside of the ring,

the fans will know who has caused it. Moreno is a very smart man, *companero*. He would arrange the accident where every one can see it. He will even attend the fight himself so that his reputation is spotless."

"Well, he can count me out," raged Hannon. "I won't get mixed up in any of his dirty business. I may be a 'gringo' but I'll fight the bulls, and I won't play any tricks on Ruiz."

Gabino smiled knowingly. "Very well, Don Jaime. It is well known that you are an honorable man. But just suppose there is a real accident in the ring. Let us imagine that Ruiz is gored. Will there be any harm in taking the credit?"

"*Vamos,*" cried Hannon. "Get out of here, you old reprobate. If we're going to fight any bulls this week, we've got to rest."

EARLY the next morning Gabino went to the corrals to inspect the bulls for Sunday's fight. There were six *Piedras Negras* bulls and with them, as was customary, a number of docile steers. These steers had a soothing effect on the bulls, kept them quiet, prevented them fighting each other or the walls of the corral. The bulls were all big, all black except one. This last was red and his horns were unusually long and sharp. The neck muscle was beautifully arched; the animal had fine legs; a long nervous tail. Gabino looked at it and groaned. What a bull! A regular locomotive, huge and deadly.

Ruiz was represented by his *picador*, Perez. The man saw Gabino and smiled crookedly.

"Come, we will draw for the bulls," he invited. "We will begin with the red one. My boss would like to meet that fellow in the ring."

A crowd had, as usual, assembled at the corrals, fans come to look over the animals scheduled for the coming fight. The *aficionados* crowded about the men who were to draw. This was an important ceremony. Already word of the feud between Ruiz and the American who called himself "Don Jaime" had spread through Mexico City.

"The red *Piedras*," stammered Gabino. "Truly a bull of nobility. My friend, Don Jaime, will polish him off in great style." Both men were boasting; their loud voices fooled nobody.

The red *Piedras* was a very devil of a bull, a terrifying beast even here in the corrals surrounded by steers. What he would look like in the ring was easily imagined. The fans shuddered in anticipation.

Now came the drawing.

What happened after that passed in a blur for Gabino, but when it was over, after the bulls had been discussed and paired, their weights and sizes and the length of their horns estimated in detail, it was found that the red bull was in Don Jaime's lot. Gabino was panic-stricken; Perez let out a great sigh of relief.

Del Hierro appeared and congratulated Gabino. "You're in luck, my friend. You've drawn a fine animal and one that should give a good performance."

"*Si, Senor,*" mumbled Gabino miserably, his bones already aching for the falls he would take tomorrow. Perez grinned. Del Hierro winked knowingly. Gabino staggered away to find Hannon and tell him of their bad luck.

Word of the red *Piedras*, his size and courage, the terrible length of his horns, spread rapidly through the cafés from the Calle López to the Avenida Madero. The red bull was discussed with awe. Every café buzzed with the talk of the *aficionados*. They went over the bull point by point, hazarding guesses as to the animal's probable "ideas"; how it would behave in the ring, whether it would hook to right or left; whether Don Jaime, the *gringo*, was man enough to kill such a terrifying and magnificent

animal. As the fans talked of the red bull, they kept looking over their shoulders as if expecting the brute to appear suddenly in the doorway of the café.

Hannon took the news calmly. He had been brought up on a ranch, had spent his boyhood with the bulls. And he had developed that peculiar understanding which sometimes occurs between man and beast. It was said that he could almost read a bull's mind.

"Forget about the red *Piedras,*" he told Gabino. "All I ask is that the bulls will come out good, that they will be brave and willing to fight. I'll take care of the rest of it. Now about the business end. You've made all arrangements with del Hierro?"

"Five thousand pesos," wailed Gabino. "The money will be waiting after the *corrida*—if we are alive to collect it. On the way back from the corrals I saw three priests walking side by side, my left shoe came untied and a cross-eyed girl tried to sell me a newspaper. Bad omens, I tell you, Don Jaime! Five thousand pesos is a lot of money, but it is not enough for us to risk our lives against the red one. It is a trick that Ruiz has played on us. He arranged for that bull; I was cheated at the drawing."

"Get the red bull out of your head and try and think of somebody we can use as *picador,* and also a sword-handler," advised Hannon.

"But don't you want to go out and see the red *Piedras?*" cried Gabino.

"We'll see him tomorrow in the ring. That's soon enough," Hannon cut him short. "To work now. Organize our *troupe*. Keep away from Ruiz; stay out of fights. We can't afford to be thrown into jail—until after tomorrow."

SUNDAY was bright, clear, and cold. Mexico City is built on what was once a lake in a great crater on top of a mountain. The air is thin and dry and so clear that the peaks at a great distance appear to be on the outskirts of the city.

The bull-ring is a modern structure of steel and reinforced concrete, a great sloping bowl with high-pitched sides, rimmed with the boxes of the wealthy and aristocratic Mexican families. The bull-fights were scheduled for four o'clock, but by two the sunny side was packed. Fans jammed themselves in their narrow seats, wedged shoulder to shoulder so that it was difficult to breath. Heated arguments sprang up on all sides. The Ruiz claque, fans who worshipped the bull-fighter, followed his every move zealously, commenting favorably on every pass and turn and movement in the ring, jeered at fans who, more for the novelty than anything else, stoutly maintained that the mysterious Don Jaime would put on a performance which would be a sensation. Venders forced their way rudely through the crowd, shouting their wares: "Beer! Chicklets! Soda water! Cigars, cigarettes!"

In the quiet of his hotel room, Hannon dressed for the fight. Cotton pads between the toes; the ankles and knees taped to give strength and steadiness to the legs. The costume of a bull-fighter, Hannon had always considered rather silly. But it was impossible to enter the ring in any other outfit. Tradition, handed down through the ages from Spain, dictated exactly what the *matador* must wear. Silk stockings, low-heeled slippers, tight-fitting *talequilla*—yellow silk breeches. Then the shirt and the sash wound tight about the stomach, the short, brilliantly ornamented jacket, the small black *montera,* two-cornered hat. In the absence of a *coleta,* or bull-fighter's pigtail, Hannon wore a black silk button pinned into his hair at the base of his skull.

Usually, when a bull-fighter dresses for the ring, his rooms are crowded with friends and loyal *aficionados* who cheer

him up, encourage him for the coming ordeal. But Hannon dressed alone.

As Hannon finished dressing, Gabino burst into his room excitedly.

"A car is waiting," he cried. "What do you think? Señor Moreno has sent his big black limousine. We will ride to the ring in state. I have arranged for the rest of our *troupe* to meet us there. Come, give me the swords and capes. It is time to go."

Rolling along the clean, wide boulevards of the city, sunk back in the luxurious upholstery of *Señor* Moreno's car, Hannon had a moment to think over what he was going to do. He'd never appeared in Mexico City before and, while he felt confident of his own ability to handle the bulls, he wondered how the fans would receive a foreigner entering the ring. Unless his performance more than satisfied them he would be jeered and hissed until the management withdrew him. And if he was taken out of the fight he would receive no pay. That was the custom of the bull-ring. The fans controlled the destiny of every fighter,—and especially the fans on the sunny side of the ring where the seats were, naturally, cheaper. Only rich Mexicans and Americans sat in the shade.

At the *puerta de la cuadrilla de calle,* the stage door of the arena, Hannon found his *troupe* awaiting him. Munoz, a veteran *picador* and Curro, an ambitious youngster who was to handle the swords. Gabino handed Hannon the parade cape which is used only for the first entrance into the ring.

Ruiz appeared, grim and silent, his face a dark mask of hatred. He studied Hannon coldly, a bleak smile slid for a moment across his face.

"Look, the *Americano's* knees are shaking already," he remarked to Perez. "It would not surprise me if this Don Jaime jumps clear over the *barrera* and into the boxes to get away from the bull."

Gabino opened his mouth to return the insult, but Hannon nudged him into silence.

A VOICE shouted. Inside the ring a bugle screamed. The gates flew open and the *paseo,* the parade, began.

The three matadors came out first, walking abreast, their short capes held tight over the shoulder, the right arm swinging free, keeping time to the music. Behind followed the *cuadrillas* of the matadors; the *picadors* were mounted and followed with the gaily decorated mule teams which were to drag out the dead bulls. The band played, the fans cheered, the bull-fight critics sharpened their pencils and began to think up cutting and sarcastic remarks about the fighters to use in their papers the next day.

Every eye was on Hannon. What kind of a man was this American? Did he appear brave? Was he quick and light on his feet? Did he handle himself as an experienced fighter?

The *paseo* broke up. The horses and mule teams galloped out of the ring. The *matadors* and *banderilleros* tossed their capes over the *barrera,* the sword handlers got behind the low wooden fence which ran around the inside of the ring.

The bugle wailed again. A small door opposite the president's box opened and the first bull entered the ring. The cheers and excitement faded into expectant silence. The bull, named Jadenero, was not large but he was sleek of coat, swift and apparently brave. The first bull belonged to Ruiz. He sent one of his *banderilleros* out to test the bull with the cape. The animal saw the man, the fluttering cape and charged savagely. The audience howled. "*Ole! Ole!* Here was a real bull, not a calf; here was a bull that was strong and brave and big. Now let's see the *matadors* do their stuff. Let's find out if they have guts enough to work close to a bull like this."

Watching the *banderilleros* work the bull back and forth across the ring, each man ducking behind the *barrera* just as the bull reached it, Hannon realized that his mouth was dry, that his heart was thumping painfully. His knees were buttery and he leaned both elbows on the wooden fence to brace himself. Always it was like this when the first bull entered the ring. Other *matadors* had often confessed the same feeling. Then the cheers of the stands, the howls from the *aficionados* would break the spell. Pride and the tense atmosphere of the bull-ring would bring back a man's confidence in himself.

Ruiz, having studied his bull carefully, walked out into the middle of the ring with the cape. Spreading its thick folds in front of his body, he advanced toward the bull.

"Ha, *toro!*" he challenged. The bull turned and saw him through angry little red eyes. He started across the ring. Here was his enemy, Man! This was the first time in all his life, Jadenero had come face to face with an unmounted man. He had, hating men as he did, been waiting for this opportunity for a long time.

Faster, faster, tail streaming straight out behind, hoofs pounding the soft sand of the ring, head low, the great hooking muscle which lies along the top of the neck and runs well down over the shoulders standing up in a hard ridge, Jadenero charged. There was the billowing cape right ahead of him and the man standing behind it. Now! Jadenero hit the cape and plowed through after the man. Ruiz stood erect, heels together, legs stiff, his back a flat plane. Only his arms moved, carrying the cape with the bull's head buried in it, off to one side, off and away. Then with a flick of the skirt he turned the bull deftly, brought it sharply around so that the bull's great neck was bent in a beautiful arch. Jadenero stopped, surprised and disgusted that he had missed. Man and bull stood facing each other in the center of the ring.

Jadenero charged again. Ruiz passed him to the left, carried him well out past his body, then turned him so short that one horn slid along the front of the *matador's* jacket.

The crowd howled with joy. Strangers banged each other on the back and screamed their applause. The few fans who had made up their minds to cheer for Don Jaime, set up a faint whistling of disapproval which was drowned out in roaring cheers.

Then Ruiz began to work the bull with the cape. Pass after pass. *Al natural, al cambio,* the *ortizima,* invented by Ortiz, the famous Mexican. He ended with the beautiful *farol* which starts as a simple *varonica* but ends with the cape floating about the man, and the bull wrapped around the *matador's* body with his nose against his tail.

Then Ruiz turned the bull, fixed him in position with a flutter of the cape, held him there, man dominating the animal. He took out his handkerchief, walked across and wiped the bull's nose, then coolly turned his back on the infuriated brute and walked away, the cape dragging in the sand behind him.

The fans went mad. No whistles were heard now. *Aficionados* screamed until they were hoarse. They beat their palms together until their hands were sore. Superb! Colossal! A scandal! A sensation! This was what you paid your money to see.

The set routine of the bull-fight proceeded rapidly. The horses, their right sides heavily padded with a thick felt mattress, were brought into the ring and the bull promptly charged them, knocking the wind out of them, while the *picador* held the bull off with the *garrocha.*

The *banderilleros* placed their gaudy darts in the big muscle over the bull's

shoulders. Then came the final act, the *faena.*

Ruiz went out with sword and muleta, the narrow red flannel cloth with which the bull is maneuvered into position for the kill. Confident now, encouraged by the applause, Ruiz killed swiftly and beautifully, man and bull charging together at the same time, Ruiz leaning in across the great horns and putting the sword exactly between the shoulder blades and into the bull's heart. Jadenero dropped to his knees as if slugged and died before his great body hit the ground.

Cheers! A roar of applause from the stands. Ruiz recovered his sword, the mules appeared and dragged out the dead bull. *Monosabios,* ring attendants in red blouses and blue trousers, raked the sand smooth where the bull had fallen. Ruiz bowed to the audience. More cheers. Ruiz began a tour of the ring bowing, and waving his arms. Two *banderilleros* followed him, sharing in the glory. Hats began to fall in the ring. The *banderilleros* picked them up and threw them back in the stands.

Ruiz watched the audience eagerly. He could see a few handkerchiefs waving but not enough. What Ruiz wanted was to be voted the ear of the dead bull, a signal honor. If everybody waved handkerchiefs that meant that the *matador* was privileged to cut off an ear and keep it as a souvenir.

Ruiz circled the ring. Already the fans were forgetting his performance. The next bull was Don Jaime's. They wanted to see what the American could do. The bugle shrilled. The door opened and the second bull, Bellintito, rushed into the ring.

Ruiz had to cut his bows short and leap over the *barrera* to get out of the bull's way.

Hannon watched the bull with a strange sensation heating his blood. It was a black bull and while the horns were not too long they appeared to be very sharp. The bull was high at the shoulders, sloping down to the tail. It charged into the center of the ring, stopped, threw up its head and stood looking at the stands.

Gabino groaned. "That one has good eyesight," he told Hannon. "He's studying the ring, trying to find something to charge."

"Go out and see what he'll do," Hannon instructed. "I've got an idea he hooks to the right. Pass him a couple of times and study his methods."

Very reluctantly Gabino walked out into the ring trailing his cape. The bull saw him at once and charged without waiting for Gabino to spread the cape or invite him. Gabino saw the bull coming, eyes glaring, nostrils red. He turned and ran. The fans howled with joy. Gabino ducked behind the burladero, the gate in the *barrera.* The bull crashed into the wooden fence behind him almost

knocking it down with the rush of the charge.

Sweat stood out on Gabino's face in ridges. "*Madre mía,*" he panted. "He almost got me that time."

RUIZ leaned his elbows on the *barrera* and sneered at Hannon. "Go get him, Yankee. That bull is but a puppy, a little one, and a coward at that. Go out and work him so that we can see what you've got."

Hannon took the cape and walked out into the ring. A hush fell over the stands. Man and bull stood facing each other for an instant, neither moving. Then Hannon spread the cape and flicked one edge of it. The bull's head went down and he charged. Hannon turned him with the cape, brought him around with a slow easy pass in which the cloth seemed to stand motionless in the air. A sigh went up from the stands. The American knew something about bull-fighting. At least he was not going to be killed on the first charge.

A few easy passes and Hannon knew a great deal about Bellintito. The animal had a tendency to hook to the right, but followed the cape nicely. A regular bull, nothing spectacular or sensational.

A ripple of applause ran around the ring as Hannon finished. The fans wanted to see more of the American's work before they decided about him. Hannon sent Gabino out again. The *banderillero* was afraid and showed it. The audience watched happily. There was not a man in the stands who wasn't afraid of a wild bull. Not one in a thousand could be hired for any sum of money to go into the ring with one of those brutes, more ferocious and deadly than a tiger. That was why they enjoyed seeing Gabino work the bull. There was a bond between the fans and the *banderillero,* fear!

But the fans were merciless. "Get close to him!" they howled. "Walk right up where he can see you. Pat him on the nose, Gabino, he won't hurt you. He's only a calf. Don't be afraid of him."

Gabino advanced cautiously, the cape loosely held in front of his body. The bull saw him, turned and charged, all in one terrifying rush. Gabino spread the cape and jumped. The bull passed through the space where the *banderillero* had been standing. One horn hooked into the cape, caught. The cape was jerked violently out of Gabino's hand and went floating away on the bull's horns. The bull turned, tossed off the cape and stood glaring at the defenseless man.

Gabino was frozen with horror. There he stood in the middle of the ring, helpless. His legs were so weak that he couldn't run. His cape lay on the ground twenty feet away. He heard the bull coming. Hoofs pounding the sand. A great spread of horns aimed at his belly. Gabino shut his eyes and waited. Something crashed into him and he was knocked sprawling. He expected to feel one of those horns goring through his chest. Nothing happened. He opened his eyes and saw Hannon working the bull with the cape. The American had knocked him out of the way and taken charge of the bull.

Hannon went out himself and placed the *banderilleras.* He did it efficiently, without any particular show of bravery. He killed the bull with dispatch. There was a little applause and a considerable amount of whistling. The fans didn't want a neat, workmanlike job; they wanted a show.

Well, Hannon told himself, at least they hadn't booed him out of the ring. It was difficult to work a bull when his mind kept turning back to the problem of Ruiz. Also there was the problem of Moreno.

Ruiz spoke to him out of the corner of his mouth. "Lousy! I knew you were

just a punk. The next time you go in I hope you get a horn right through here." He tapped himself on the chest.

The bugle. Another bull. Ruiz took his cape and went out to see what he had drawn. This bull was big and he had a certain slow dignity about him. Ruiz invited him with the cape and the bull charged. But he took his time about it, trying to figure out what kind of a game was being played.

Hannon watched the bull, shook his head slowly. Ruiz had better be careful. This big brute was clever. He followed the man instead of the cape. Bad business. Hannon moved out into the ring, a bunched cape hanging over his arm. It was the duty of one *matador* to help the other in dangerous situations. Ruiz saw Hannon out of the corner of his eye, made a contemptuous gesture.

"Get away, you fool," he cried. "Take care of your own bulls and I'll take care of mine."

Ruiz spread his cape and whirled it savagely in the bull's face. The crowd cheered. Hannon shrugged and turned away, walked toward the *barrera*. No use starting an argument with Ruiz. Hannon heard something behind him, the soft drum of hoofs in the sand. Gabino screamed at him from behind the barrera. Hannon spun on his toes—and the bull's horns slid under his arm. The bull came around in a grunting turn, lunged again, but this time Hannon was ready with the spread cape. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Ruiz walking across the ring, a sour smile on his face.

"Let that teach you a lesson," growled the Mexican. "You keep out of the ring while I'm working the bull."

Hannon vaulted the *barrera* and came down beside Gabino. The little man was boiling with excitement and rage.

"He tried to murder you," he cried. "He let the bull charge you from behind. It is an old trick and you almost got it in the back."

Hannon shrugged. "It's part of the game, I suppose."

"And how about Moreno?" challenged Gabino. "He saw what you just did in the ring. He won't love you for that."

"This bull is a bad one," Hannon told his friend. "When they act like that they're dangerous. He almost got Ruiz once and he'll keep on trying until his horns hit something beside the air."

"You had better do your worrying about the red *Piedras*," advised Gabino. "Let Ruiz figure out his bulls for himself."

Ruiz finished with the cape and came over to stand by the *barrera* while the bull was charging the horses. He let Munoz put in the *banderilleros*, then took his sword and *muleta* and walked out for the final act.

"Now will be the time," Hannon muttered to himself. The bull will be waiting for him."

"Where are you going," cried Gabino. "Come back, come back. Don't go into the ring."

But Hannon was already walking out toward Ruiz and the bull.

THE MEXICAN was playing the bull with the *muleta* as if that narrow stripe of flannel had been a wide cape. He stamped his foot and called the bull, "*Ha toro!*" The bull charged and Ruiz passed him so close that the foam from the brute's nostrils splashed his jacket. Without moving his feet he turned the bull and brought him back again, still closer. At each pass the fans gasped. Faint cries of "*Ole! Ole!*" came from the stands. The bull charged, with Ruiz passing him again, one horn clipping a piece of braid from the front of his jacket. A great gasp of supressed excitement swept around the ring.

Hannon watched curiously, noting that each time the bull charged he swerved slightly to the left as he came in. And he also noticed that a little

breeze had sprung up and that Ruiz' *muleta* had a tendency to flutter each time he offered it to the bull.

And then Ruiz turned the bull, maneuvered him into position, both front feet together, shoulders level, head down. Now for the *estocada*, the final moment of killing. Ruiz posed with the sword pointed along his chest and aimed at the one vital spot between the bull's shoulder blades. He rose on his toes. His left hand, held low, flicked the cape. The bull charged. Ruiz went in over the horns and lunged out with the sword.

And then everything happened at once and so fast that the eye could not follow.

The sword hit bone, doubled and sprang back, flying up in the air in a sparkling arc to drop in the sand ten feet away. At the same time, just as the bull hurled his great bulk forward, the breeze lifted the corner of the *muleta* showing the man beyond. The bull swerved ever so slightly. Ruiz shot up into the air, arms and legs flying. He came down between the horns and was immediately tossed again. He rose in the air with both hands covering his belly. A vast shout went up from the ring, a choked cry of horror.

Hannon could see Ruiz' face as he turned over, could read the agony written there, the fear of death, the knowledge that the next time he came down the bull would get him. He had made one bad guess—and that was the end.

Ruiz fell heavily, lay with one arm buckled under him, the *muleta* draped around his shoulder like a shawl. The bull had a good look at the man lying on the ground, took careful aim with one great curved horn and charged.

But Hannon, running forward like a sprinter, shot between the bull and the prostrate man. His cape opened like a net, came down over the bull's head and horns completely blinding him. In a flash Hannon had turned, scooped up Ruiz from the ground and was running toward the *barrera*.

The stands exploded. The place became a lunatic asylum. Everybody howled, shrieked, laughed, jumped up and down on the seats. They'd just witnessed a miracle, a thing impossible. But with their own eyes they'd seen Don Jaime snatch Ruiz from under the bull's nose. Ruiz was just the same as dead, his end had come, but Don Jaime had made him a present of his life.

The third *matador* killed the bull. Nobody paid any attention to him. Ruiz disappeared in the direction of the infirmary. Hannon took his place behind the *barrera*, paying no attention to the cheering mob about him.

"You've done it now!" Gabino shouted in his ear. "All you had to do was stand still and Ruiz would be a ghost by this time. But, no, you had to rush out and make a hero of yourself. And the next bull is yours, the red *Piedras*. Whose going to help you if that one is too big and strong to be handled?"

"Did you see Ruiz?" asked Hannon vaguely. "Was he badly gored?"

"They don't know yet," Gabino told him. "Anyway, it's not for you to worry about. Get your mind on the red *Piedras*. You'll be out in the ring before long fighting for your own life. It takes good nerve and a cool head. The soup is in the fire now about Moreno. The only way to save your hide is to kill this bull quick, get our money and go away from here as fast as we can travel."

The bugle wailed, the *monos* leveled the sand in the ring. No matter what happened, the fight must go on. The fans had paid money to see six bulls killed. Nobody knew how badly Ruiz had been hurt, so in the meantime—bring on the next bull.

The door opened and in came the red *Piedras*. A great "A-a-a-h!" went up from the ring. This was the bull they had all talked about, this was the red

Piedras, a very devil of a bull, huge and ugly and brave.

Studying the bull, Hannon knew that he was facing the fight of his life. The red *Piedras* was even bigger than Gabino had described him. Big and bold and crafty, with a great spread of horns, sharp and dangerous as swords.

A man stepped out into the ring and offered the bull the cape. The red *Piedras* almost knocked the *barrera* down in his frantic effort to reach the man. From the other side of the ring another *banderillero* called the bull. *"Toro, ah toro!"* The bull turned and charged. He crossed the ring at the speed of an express train. With one horn he brushed the cape aside and lunged at the man beyond. The *banderillero* shot over the fence with his breeches ripped from waist to knee. As he leaped for safety the red *Piedras* slashed at him again.

"Did you see that?" *Madre de Dios,"* cried Gabino, his face a pasty green. "And they expect us to go out there and play tag with that locomotive. Look at him rush around the ring watching everything that moves.

"He's a locomotive all right," Hannon agreed, "but he runs on wheels. He is one bull out of a thousand."

"Be careful, Don Jaime," begged Gabino. "Play it safe with that elephant. Don't try any fancy work until he has been tired out a little. He's too strong for you now."

The stands buzzed with conversation as the fans discussed the bull in awed voices. Never had such an animal come into the ring at Mexico City. He was as big as any bull which had ever appeared in Spain or Lima. He was too big. It was not fair to expect any man to handle such a mountain of flesh.

Hannon stood in the middle of the ring facing the red *Piedras.* He saw that this was indeed a magnificent animal, big but beautifully proportioned, built for speed and action. He spread the cape and the bull charged. Hannon turned slightly, letting the cape flow away from his body. The bull thundered past so close that Hannon could feel the heat from the creature's body, could smell the heavy, musky odor of the bull.

A TENSE hush settled over the ring. The red *Piedras* was a great bull, an exceptional bull, a bull such as any *matador* might be proud to meet. The *aficionados* sensed this at once. Experience told them that this huge red brute was not only big but very crafty, shrewd, skilled in the use of its rapier-like horns. Many successful battles had that bull fought for the supremacy in the range. For generations men had been breeding bulls, selecting the best fighting strains, eliminating the weaklings and the cowards, just so that this red *Piedras* could appear in the ring in Mexico City on this bright, cool Sunday afternoon. Ah, but would the matador be as good as the bull? Now if that were only Ortiz there in the ring, or Gaona, or perhaps the great La Serna, what an afternoon it would be! But the American, Don Jaime—*quién sabe?*

Hannon understood bulls as well as the fans. His preliminary work with the fighting cape had convinced him that the red *Piedras* was a spectacular bull. The animal would charge in a straight line—and would keep on charging as long as there was life in the great body. "On wheels" as they say of such a bull. And it is the dream of every fighter to meet such a one as the red *Piedras* in the ring. Hannon had heard old *matadors,* battered and scarred after many years in the ring, talk of famous bulls they had fought, had heard these bulls described point by point; how they charged, how they went after the horses, how they fought till the last breath and died with jaws clamped tight so that no blood spilled from their mouths.

The American forgot about the audience, forgot he was in a bull-ring. His mind contained only one picture, that of himself and the red *Piedras*. As he worked the bull, the ring disappeared and his ears were deaf to the cheering mob. The world narrowed to a strip of sand where a man and a wild bull stood face to face, each determined to kill the other, each determined to dominate, the man's mind and skill and the speed of his body pitted against the mind and the great horns and the two tons of lunging weight behind those horns.

Hannon began with a few simple *veronicas*. A pass to the left, a pass to the right, ending with a *rebolero* in which the cape stood out about his body in stiff folds as he turned slowly, the bull following the cape around the man. Great lunging gasps went up from the stands. Hannon started another series of *veronicas*, the pass which is the basis of all cape work. This time he gathered in the folds of the cape after each pass. Smaller and smaller the cape became in his hands until at last it appeared no bigger than a handkerchief, a brightly colored handkerchief which fluttered just at the end of the bull's nose.

He let the cape billow out to its full width, swung it about his shoulders like a cloak and stood facing the bull, his body exposed to the horns, the cape flapping loosely on each arm. Then he began that most beautiful of all passes, the *mariposa*, or butterfly. Moving slowly backward across the ring with the bull charging the cape, first on the right, then on the left, dominated by the fluttering cloth, so fascinated, so controlled by the *matador* that the bull never sees the man's body standing in front of him, unprotected.

A quick swing of the cape fixed the bull in position. Hannon turned and walked away, slowly without even looking back, so well did he know what the bull would do.

A wave of applause washed around the ring. It grew louder, thundered from rim to rim. Sincere, honest, applause, the reward for work well and bravely done.

When Hannon reached the *barrera* he found Gabino chattering like a monkey. The man was almost insane from the nervous excitement under which he had been laboring.

"Not me, not me!" he cried fearfully. "I couldn't go in the ring with him. My heart would stop if that skyscraper ever headed in my direction."

"Go tell the *picadors* not to hurt the bull," instructed the horseman. A *picador* can cripple a bull and sometimes he does so if his *matador* is afraid of the animal. Hannon watched the red *Piedras* boost three horses around the ring. Then he went out with a pair of gaudy red *banderilleras*. Calmly he walked over to the *barrera* on the sunny side of the ring. Coolly he placed his shoulders against the wooden fence, lifted high the barbed sticks, rose to his toes—and called the bull. *"Toro, ah, Toro!"*

The bull started across the ring. The crowd groaned. Don Jaime was in what was considered impossible terrain. Standing there against the wall, there was no way he could avoid the bull's rush. Ah, yes, there was one way—but it was too dangerous for most *matadors* to attempt.

On came the bull, determined this time to get the man. And there was no cape to fool him, no way the man could escape.

Hannon studied the bull's charge carefully. He knew that the bull had learned one lesson about the *barrera;* that it was a solid wooden fence and could not be knocked over with a sudden rush. The bull would remember; Hannon counted on that.

The red *Piedras* slowed, took aim and stabbed at the man. Hannon's body swayed slightly to the left and the bull's horns followed. Then the man's body whipped to the right. The bull thought

he had missed and tried to stop. His great knees bent forward and crashed into the *barrera*. Hannon, standing between the animal's legs, bent forward and placed the *banderillas* close together in the big muscle just over the bull's shoulders. The red *Piedras* staggered to its feet—and Hannon slipped out and away.

He took another pair of *banderilleras,* walked out to the middle of the ring and dropped to his knees. And now a cry went up from the fans which is seldom heard in any bull-ring.

"No, no, no, no, no, no!" the *aficionados* chanted hoarsely. "No, no, no, no, no, no! Stop now before it is too late!" The fans shouted all together, begging Don Jaime not to take such risks. He'd already given them their money's worth. Why get himself killed placing a few *banderilleras?*

But Hannon had other ideas. And he knew the bull, knew him as thoroughly as if he'd raised him from a calf. The bull charged; again Don Jaime feinted with his body, put in the two sticks. The bull missed and went churning on across the sand before it could stop. Hannon got up and walked away. For once, silence hung over the bull ring.

And now for the final act, the "moment of truth" as the Spanish call it, the killing of the bull. Hannon took *muleta* and sword and very regretfully walked out to finish the job. The bull was waiting. Still a brave bull. Two tons of courage; willing to charge at the slightest movement. Hannon spread the *muleta* with the sword, offered it to the red *Piedras.* The bull charged and Hannon lifted his head with a beautiful pass, *ayudado por alto.* Then he shifted the *muleta* to his left hand and made a *pasa de pecho,* in which the bull slid along the front of his jacket. With the right hand he passed the bull very low, turned him easily and brought him back again.

Hannon was working close to the bull now, dominating the animal, knowing just how much movement of the cloth was necessary in order to provoke a charge. Man and bull seemed moulded into one great, ever-changing figure, the bull's horns sliding past the man each time, the bull turning and coming back again as brave as ever.

"Hate to do it old boy," Hannon muttered. His body was bathed in sweat. The tight, padded jacket clung about his shoulders in a sodden mass. Hannon had just completed fifteen minutes of the most violent exercise and, while his body was sweltering in the ill-suited costume, his mind was still cool and clear. Now he must kill the bull. The death of the bull was the tragedy around which the entire technique of the bull fight was built.

He brought the animal around and into position, easily, gently, with the fluttering tip of the *muleta*. He set himself, profiled with the sword along his chest, the body sideways to the bull, the *muleta* held low, the bull dominated by that faintly fluttering scarlet cloth.

Now! Don Jaime hesitated. Again he tried to force himself to drive the sword through to the bull's heart. He couldn't do it. Then the realization came to him; this bull must be saved! He lowered the sword, shifted it to his left hand. Then, very slowly, he leaned across the bull's horns and plucked out one of the *banderilleras*. The crowd gasped. He tossed the *banderillera* over his shoulder, moved around on the other side and took out another. The bull flinched a little but that was all. Slowly, carefully, almost tenderly, Hannon removed the irritating darts, which he himself had placed in the bull's shoulder muscle.

He stepped back, the bull watching every move. He turned and held his sword aloft in that most magnificent of all bull-fighting gestures. He was asking that the bull be pardoned. He implied that this bull was too good to kill, that it must be allowed to live and sent to some breeding ranch where it could provide valiant fighting sons for many a bull-fight to come.

There was a moment of stunned silence. Then a tornado was let loose in the ring.

"*Si, si, si, si!*" shrieked the fans. The bull was too brave to kill! Ten thousand voices demanded that it be pardoned. The president of the fight leaned forward from his box and waved a white handkerchief. The bull need not die. Hannon thanked him with a flourish of the sword.

The gate on the other side of the ring opened and two trained steers came galloping in. The red *Piedras* had been watching Hannon all this time. He started to charge, changed his mind, turned and trotted off with the steers, disappeared through the gate and was gone.

THERE is nothing more contagious than enthusiasm at a bull fight. The earthquake which Gabino had prophesied now occurred. The fans milled madly up and down the aisles, they leaped down into the ring by the hundreds and ran toward Don Jaime. The police tried to beat them back with the flat of their swords. But nothing could stop the human tide which poured into the ring, each man yelling hoarsely, each wanting to be the first to reach the new idol. Hannon was picked up and tossed, he was handed from group to group. Men fought to carry him. He rode high on a dozen shoulders.

"Around the ring! Hail the *gringo!*" somebody shouted. And the parade began. Hats showered down from the stands, the mob cheered and shouted. The police wisely got out of the way.

Six times around the ring they carried Don Jaime, the greatest honor that can be extended to any *matador*. When they

put him down at last, battered and bruised, he found a radiant, beaming Gabino at his elbow.

"This way, this way!" urged Gabino. "I've already collected the money. The car is waiting. Let us get away from here at once."

Hannon allowed himself to be led through the entrance of the ring. A familiar car waited, surrounded by a cheering mob, a mob which had not had the money to buy tickets but had followed the fight from outside the ring, echoing the cheers from the lucky fans who had seats. Hannon and Gabino stumbled into the car, the door slammed. The engine drummed, a siren shrieked a warning and they were off.

"*Madre de dios,*" Gabino made a choking noise in his throat. And for the first time Hannon realized that he was again riding in Moreno's automobile and that Moreno himself sat on one of the little seats, calmly studying the sweat-stained and exhausted American.

"It could not be helped," Gabino babbled. "Do not blame him if Ruiz did not come to his finish. I tell you, nothing could be done."

Moreno shook a brown finger in Gabino's face. "Quiet, you," he ordered. "It is with Don Jaime I wish to speak. Ruiz was not even injured by the bull's horns. Only his dignity is hurt and it will be a long time before that heals. He will be laughed out of every ring in Mexico. Fortunately, my daughter witnessed the fight from the family box. Now she scorns that tramp, Ruiz."

"I am to stay?" stammered Hannon.

Moreno smiled and made an airy gesture. "That little matter is forgotten," he said. "After I saw your performance in the ring today I know that you will never be treated as a foreigner in Mexico."

Hannon slumped back against the cushion, suddenly relaxed, relieved at the sudden change of events. Gabino came to life with a start. He began to see visions and dream dreams. Visions of a great many pesos and dreams of the coming glory of Don Jaime, which of course, Gabino could share.

"Like I said, it was a sensation," he announced bravely. "There will be all the contracts Don Jaime wants in the future. We will travel everywhere, to Lima, to Spain. The world is before us."

"But I have more news," cried Moreno proudly. "I have purchased the red *Piedras* and I will buy a ranch on which to breed the finest bulls in Mexico, the finest bulls in the world. I will be Don Jaime's patron; I will guide him through the years to come."

Now that it was all over, Hannon found he was very tired. He lighted a cigarette, took a deep inhale and let the smoke dribble out of his nose. His lean, hard face was turned toward the blue haze of mountains in the distance.

"The bulls give," he muttered to himself, "and the bulls take."

THE MAGIC OF LITTLE-DOC

By KENNETH BROWN COLLINGS

THE Hotel Montaigne clings to the mountainside, high above Port au Prince and the blue waters of the [illegible]. On its broad veranda, old Valois, who for many years had served the American occupation as interpreter, sat talking to a group of tourists.

"And so," he said, "I shall take my long deferred vacation and look at this New York of yours, about which I hear so much. I shall see many things, but especially do I wish to visit your Madison Square Garden; I wish to see . . . but then, you would not understand my wish to visit that particular place unless I first told you the story of 'Little-Doc' Little:

It was at the time when the smallpox epidemic was raging throughout Haiti, and while I was waiting one day in the headquarters of the aviation squadron at Hasco, that Little-Doc walked in and saluted Major Drayton.

He was not really a doctor—only a second-class hospital corpsman—but he was well named. He *was* little—although broad-shouldered—and he had a small head and finely drawn features.

His face had the look of a dreamer or a student, and he seemed out of place among that crew of two-fisted fighting men. But after all, why not? He was a hospital corpsman, not a marine. When he opened his mouth to speak, it was evident that he was excited—perhaps even scared. But again, why not? His trade was medicine, not soldiering.

"Y—you sent for me, M-Major?" asked Little-Doc.

"I did," said the major, grimly. "See the squadron quartermaster and tell him to issue you a .45 automatic."

"A g-gun, Major? I'm a non-combatant. P-pistols are against regulations for the hospital corps . . . and besides, sir, I never shot a gun in my life."

"You don't by any chance happen to

be the 'medical personnel' of this squadron, do you?" Biting sarcasm rang in the major's question. "Oh! You do? Well, read *that,* you half-wit . . . and then go draw that gun; you'll need it."

Little-Doc read the official paper which the major passed across the desk; he read the last part of it a second time, and his face turned a sickly green.

". . . and as the inhabitants of this village, incited by the local Judge de la Paix, have refused vaccination by the duly constituted officials of the Department of Public Health, it is now declared to be a matter of urgent military importance. The Commanding Officer, Squadron D, Aviation Section, is therefore ordered to immediately transport the squadron medical personnel, together with medical supplies, by airplane to Nancy la Source. Immediately upon arrival, the said medical personnel will proceed to vaccinate the entire population of this area, *by force, if necessary.*"

Poof! Just like that, Little-Doc Little was handed the well-nigh impossible job of vaccinating some four or five hundred rebelling black hillmen, "by force, if necessary." It was such a simple thing to write on a piece of paper, but gentlemen, let me recall the times.

Even before the smallpox specter reared its ugly head, Haiti was torn by uprisings—was in a state of semi-revolt, in fact. For more than a year, the Caco chieftain, Maximilian Sam, had dodged the Marine and Gendarme patrols. He was in his heyday, robbing, slaughtering, burning plantations, and painting the mountains crimson in general.

Then, overnight, the patrols were recalled from the futile pursuit of Maximilian; there was an even more sinister menace to fight. The colonel's cook had come to work with a tell-tale white postule on her forehead, and before the day was done, more than twenty others, similarly afflicted had followed her to the hospital.

The tropics hold many terrors, gentlemen, but smallpox can make the others seem insignificant. It sweeps across the mountains with the speed and devastation of a windswept forest fire, leaving a shambles of death in its wake. The doctors muttered a silent prayer; they clapped the patients into isolation wards; they issued orders for the vaccination of the entire population.

You know that our blacks are a primitive people and very superstitious; they soon had food for wild and exaggerated tales. The relatives of the smallpox patients already in the hospital called to visit them, they were of course refused permission to do so; and instead, the visitors were themselves summarily vaccinated.

Immediately, strange and ghastly rumors raced across the city and on out into the bush. In the mountains, the tom-toms began to talk; from peak to peak they throbbed with the news.

Within two days, every hillman in Haiti knew that the Blanc devil-doctors had kidnaped dozens of innocent natives and locked them in a prison called "hospital." In the dead of night, they slowly tortured their victims to death. From their dead bodies, the white doctors made a poison they called "vaccinate." Already, they had slashed open the bodies of visitors to the hospital and poured quarts of this terrible poison into their veins. The helpless house-servants of the whites had been similarly assaulted, and this, the drums boomed, was only the beginning:

With this deadly poison, the white conquerers planned to exterminate the black population of Haiti and thereafter colonize it with whites.

Thus, the hillmen lived in terror of their only possible salvation—vaccination. And you can well imagine that Maximilian Sam lost no time turning this new feeling of revolt to his own purposes.

A sergeant named Barlow was luckless enough to fall into Maximilian's hands.

The Caco chief of chiefs—as he styled himself—had never been reticent about torturing his victims. At one stage in his career, his most prized possession was a pair of mechanic's pliers—an instrument of exquisite torture, when applied to finger and toe nails—but now he invented something new.

He told his followers that if the hated Blancs were now resorting to poison, so would he. He staked Barlow to the ground, and then caught a pair of tarantulas and placed them on the sergeant's face. . . You can guess the rest.

For some reason—we hoped that he had himself died of smallpox—Maximilian dropped from sight, but the damage had been done. The news of his treatment of Barlow spread all over the island; the hillmen set out traps to catch tarantulas alive; and their slogan became: *poison for the poisoners!*

All of these unpleasant things must have run through Little-Doc's head as he stood facing Major Drayton, but he said nothing.

"Don't stand there gawking at me," roared the major. "Go draw that gun from the quartermaster and be ready to shove off in half an hour."

LITTLE-DOC walked out of the office and across to the quartermaster. He signed a memorandum receipt and departed, carrying a Colt .45 and a hundred rounds of ammunition. He carried the gun gingerly, as if he was afraid of it.

When he entered the little sick-bay and looked at his shelves full of medical supplies, the troubled look left his face. In this place, Little-Doc—who was a true medical man at heart—was at home. Here were the things which lessened the sufferings of humanity. He shoved his shoulders back and picked out his supplies.

He probably wouldn't need more than five hundred points of vaccine, but allowing for possible breakage in transit, he took a thousand. He wrapped them in stout manila paper, and then covered the paper with a layer of cotton for padding. Outside of this, he wrapped more paper and heavy twine.

Then his eye caught another package, which had arrived on the same boat with the vaccine, but which he had not opened as yet. Little-Doc snapped the twine, and when the contents was exposed, he smiled grimly at the complete ignorance of Haitien conditions displayed by the laboratory which had shipped that vaccine.

The package contained a thousand celluloid lapel badges, which were used in some schools in the States to make vaccination seem to the children more like a game than medical treatment. Across the face of each two-inch white button, was the scarlet legend: "I AM VACCINATED. ARE YOU?"

Little-Doc started to toss the badges into the trash basket, then changed his mind and placed the bundle with the rest of his kit. He took another unenthusiastic look at the forty-five; he strapped the holster around his waist; then he picked up a sharp knife and went outside and toward the bush across the road.

When, exactly half an hour from the time he left the major, Little-Doc walked up to the DH plane which waited with idling motor, he carried, in addition to his kit, a four to five foot wooden club, about an inch and a quarter in diameter and curved at the end.

"What in the hell?" asked Lieutenant Foster, who was the pilot, "are you going to do with that glorified golf club . . . or maybe it's a crutch? Anyway, get in and strap that parachute on you; it's time to shove."

Nancy la Source, gentlemen, lies to the northeast of here, across three ranges of mountains. Its population is perhaps the most ignorant and generally backward of any district in Haiti. From time to time, it has furnished hideaways for

bandits fleeing the Gendarmes, and it has always been a hot-bed of superstition and Voodoo.

The flying field at this town was an emergency field only. It was nothing more than a narrow ledge, or shelf, on the far side of the third mountain range, about two miles from the village itself. It was only wide enough for a plane to land in one direction; only twice before had anyone landed there at all.

Some forty-five minutes later Lieutenant Foster spiraled down for a landing and found the field littered with grazing horses and cattle. To land among them would surely wreck the plane, so Foster flew low over the field in an effort to scare the trespassing livestock away. The roar of the motor and the blast of the propeller scared them, all right, but they only charged around in circles. Thus, they were an even greater menace than before.

For more than fifteen minutes, the pilot made repeated efforts to land, but without success. At his wits' end, he circled at about fifteen hundred feet, trying to figure out some way to obey his orders and unload Little-Doc and his medical kit. Suddenly the plane lurched, only slightly, but as if relieved of a part of its load.

The pilot turned and looked behind him; the rear cockpit was empty; Little-Doc was gone . . . and then Foster saw him. About two hundred feet below and behind, a parachute flowered out of its case and the dangling body of the little hospital corpsman was snubbed up short in its dive. One of his arms was firmly hooked through the straps of his pack, and with that hand, he clutched his club. With the other hand he had pulled the rip-cord of his parachute.

Military parachutes are small—not like the bulky contraptions used for practice and exhibitions—and are intended for emergency use only. They let a man down pretty fast, and broken legs from their use are not uncommon, even on level ground. When Foster saw Little-Doc plunge through the solid screen of brush on the steep side of the mountain and disappear, he turned his plane towards Thomonde—the nearest regular field—and opened his throttle wide. He would ask the commanding officer there to rush a ground patrol, and find out what had happened to the hospital corpsman.

But other than a few scratches and bruises, nothing whatever had happened to Little-Doc . . . or so he thought at first. The 'chute had caught in the branches of a tree as he plunged through; now he hung suspended, four or five feet off the ground. He unfastened his parachute harness and dropped, carefully shielding his pack, with its precious cargo of vaccine.

Now a sharp pain burned into his groin. His medical knowledge told him that somewhere inside a ligament or a muscle had been wrenched in the landing in the trees. The stick came in handy; using it for a crutch, Little-Doc threaded his way down through the brush and sought the floor of the valley, where lay Nancy la Source.

NEAR the bottom of the mountain he came to a thatched roof hut. No one was about, so he sat down to rest for a few minutes. Then he noticed that beneath the torn left sleeve of his shirt, his arm had been scratched by the briars.

The involuntary instinct of a medical man in the tropics—where every least break in the skin is a potential source of infection—made him open his kit and take out a bottle of mercurochrome. Little-Doc was busily engaged in painting the scratches a brilliant red, when a curious-eyed ten-year-old boy emerged timidly from the brush and came up to watch.

Perhaps, gentlemen, Little-Doc's next moves were the result of one of those hunches which all men get from time to

time, or perhaps they were the result of a carefully thought out plan. That I cannot tell you, although, except for his stick, he was now unarmed. He had left the pistol in the cockpit of the plane, and that fact now fitted into the rest of his actions.

"Why do you make a red cross on your arm, Blanc?" asked the boy.

"That is magic to ward off the vaccination poison," answered Little-Doc, in his best Creole. "And I'm not a Blanc; my great-grandfather was a Haitien, like yourself."

Being a native of the hills, where workers of magic abound, the boy was all ears. And after a pause, the hospital corpsman continued:

"When I refused to be vaccinated, the white poisoners learned that I was a Haitien. Then they disarmed me and tried to kill me. You saw yourself that they took me into the air and threw me from the devil flying machine . . . but I have a bigger magic than they have, and I was *not* killed. I floated to earth on my magic shirt, which even now hangs from the trees on the mountain. And you can also see, that I have no gun, and no Blancs ever enter the hill country unarmed.

"Would you?" asked Little-Doc, taking a red-lettered badge from his pack, "like to join my society and wear this beautiful button . . . and also to have this mystical red cross tattooed on your arm?"

With the longing eyes of all primitive peoples the world over, the boy viewed the gaudy decorations.

"What," he asked, the native caution of the hill people still making him hesitate, "is this society . . . and who was your great-grandfather?"

"It is the magic society of the red cross; those who wear its mark and badge are immune from the vaccination poison. If a white devil-doctor tries to vaccinate such a man, this poisoner will drop dead in his tracks . . . and my great-grandfather was none other than the Emperor Christophe."

That last statement clinched the argument, for Haitiens are used to descendants of Christophe; the island swarms with them. Little-Doc, however, knew better than to rush things.

Taking the button in his hand, he plucked a hair from his head and a bit of dirt from underfoot. These he rubbed against the badge, solemnly intoning all the while the only thing he could think of:

"Eeny, meeny, miney, moe; catch a black man by his toe; if he hollers let him go; eeny, meeny, miney, moe."

As he chanted, Little-Doc advanced to the spellbound boy and rolled up his ragged shirt sleeve. With the dauber he made a red cross on the lad's arm; with a needle he broke the skin with the smallest of scratches; then, snapping the tiny glass point of vaccine, he touched the scratch with its contents. He wound up the performance by pinning the button on the boy's shirt.

Then the corpsman watched the lad bolt down the trail to show his new adornments and to tell his marvelous tale of the almost—but not quite—white descendant of Christophe, king of kings, who had come to the hills to save the natives from the white man's poison. Devoutly, Little-Doc hoped that no one in Nancy la Source understood enough English to decipher the lettering on that badge: I AM VACCINATED. ARE YOU?

HE did not have to wait long for the first developments. The underbrush rustled in a dozen places and he knew he was being observed by hundreds of peering eyes. Further up the slope, he could hear the hum of excited voices, and he knew the hillmen were examining the remnants of his parachute.

When one man, bolder than the rest, walked out and openly regarded Little-

Doc, all the while thumbing the keen edge of his machete, the corpsman took the bull by the horns and shouted imperiously:

"Bring me the feathers of a chicken killed in the moonlight, and the bones of a female dog! I am a worker of mighty magic; I cannot work without tools."

The man departed, uncertainly. While the natives held a palaver and talked things over, Little-Doc sat down to spend the most unpleasant period of his life. If they didn't believe him, he could well imagine what the results would be.

About an hour later, a delegation came up the trail . . . and the corpsman breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that they brought the feathers and the bones for which he had asked. They invited him into the town.

All morning long, Little-Doc vaccinated a steady stream of natives and pinned badges on them with the proper ceremonies. They passed in one side of the biggest hut in town—where he had set up his workship—and out the other. The rumors from Port au Prince had been so grossly exaggerated that all of the hillmen believed vaccination to be a major operation akin to cutting off an arm; none suspected the simple pin-prick as being other than the tattooing which Doc called it.

From these outward signs, gentlemen, any one of us would have been fooled into a false sense of security. We would have thought—perhaps justifiably—that the strategy was completely successful. But Little-Doc knew better. He knew that disaster was still hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles.

By all the established customs of the hill towns, the Judge de la Paix and his chiefs should have occupied the place of honor at the head of that line. To the contrary, they had refused this position. They had announced that they would be *last*, which place—they now asserted—befitted their dignity.

From this, Little-Doc knew that the head men of the village were not convinced. So far, they were letting him go ahead with his supposed sorcery, for much the same reason that more civilized people make a point of not walking under ladders, or not lighting three cigarettes on one match. There *might* be something in it.

Yes, the chiefs were well satisfied to let Little-Doc make guinea pigs out of the populace and try his magic on them. It gave the Judge and his cronies that much more time to make up *their* minds; if this man *did* turn out to be the mighty sorcerer he claimed to be, in no way would the chiefs have incurred his ire by having interfered with him. And if he turned out to be a fraud, there was plenty of time to deal with him; he could not escape.

Little-Doc sensed all of this. It had him sweating blood. There was, however, nothing he could do but hope for the best and vaccinate as many as he could before they killed him. By the time he had intoned his idiotic chant, a hundred times over, his throat was dry and his voice was hoarse. He also figured that a bold demeanor was his only salvation—so he demanded the assistance befitting a sorcerer of the first class.

The Judge de la Paix, still sparring for time, assigned—none too willingly—the half dozen best drummers in the town to learn the chant and assist Little-Doc. As no Haitien hillman can long listen to the thumping of tom-toms without feeling the urge to dance, the hut was soon filled with swaying figures.

Gentlemen, I doubt if there has ever been anything like the next two days. In the center of this bedlam stood a sweating second class hospital corpsman in the United States Navy, vaccinating an unending line of Haitien hillmen who fought for places in that line. And always with him was the sick certainty that eventually the Judge de la Paix

would walk up behind his back and split his skull with a machete—or worse.

Even if the Judge *did* defer *his* action, you see, any one of the patients would cheerfully slit his throat if he even *guessed* what was happening to him. And the very first time that any of them met any one who could read the badges—that also was not pleasant to contemplate.

Every inch in the hut was crowded with crazed dancers. In the far corner, six husky blacks pounded six enormous tom-toms, sang to the time of the drums.

"Eeny, meeny, miney, moe," chanted the voices.

"Oompah, oompah, oompah, oom," throbbed the drums, at the end of each line of the jingle.

"Catch-o, black-o, by-o, toe . . . rub-a-dub . . . dub, dub . . . dub, dub, dub."

LITTLE-DOC, at the end of two days of this, was almost dead and very nearly crazy. He had vaccinated nearly five hundred natives, not only unassisted, but impeded by all the hocus-pocus . . . *and worried sick by the fact that the chiefs were not much impressed.* He had been constantly on his feet; he had slept only about five hours all told; the pain in his groin was almost unbearable.

But *except* for the Judge de la Paix and his five or six chiefs his job was done. The showdown could no longer be postponed; with his heart in his shoe-tops, Little-Doc sent an imperative summons to the head men.

They had retreated to a hut above the village to hold a powwow. They sent word that Little-Doc was to await their return. And this, the corpsman knew, would be fatal; if he were to take a single order from them, his prestige would be gone.

A look of grim determination spread across his face. He picked up his kit, grabbed his hooked stick, and climbed up to the shack. When he entered the single room, the strained look of the natives standing around the walls told him the worst. There were six of them, all armed with machetes. In addition, the Judge de la Paix and one other man, had ancient, but deadly looking pistols stuck in their belts; several were wearing sheath-knives besides. Even before the Judge started to speak, Doc knew the jig was up.

"Worker of magic," said the Judge, as Little-Doc dropped his pack, "we think you have lied to us. Before we submit to your devil-marks, we shall put you to the test. If your magic is proof against poison, it will prevent the tarantula from killing you. Therefore, we shall tie you tightly, and let two tarantulas bite your face. In the morning, if you are still alive, we shall know you have told the truth."

He had hardly finished speaking when Little-Doc went into action. With the hook of his stick, he snagged the feet of the Judge out from under him and sent him sprawling. In the very same motion, he rammed the butt end of the stick into the stomach of a native who stood beside him. The man collapsed, clutching his belly and groaning.

Gentlemen, that crooked stick was everywhere, with the speed of light; there was no escaping it. Doc smashed the Judge's knees as he lay prostrate; he clubbed the heads of two others before they could lift their machetes for a killing blow. He punched stomachs and cracked shins; he tripped their owners with the curve of the club . . . when they tried to rise, he knocked them cold with blows on the head.

And even as Little-Doc fought for his life, he started to sing. He knew full well that there was too much noise to avoid being heard by the villagers—already curious—so at the top of his voice he started again the chant off: "Eeny, meeny, miney, moe."

A machete grazed his leg and drew blood; an instant later its wielder

groaned with a broken wrist. One native reached across the floor to grasp Little-Doc's legs from under him; the club descended with crushing force on the base of his skull. In a few seconds, all but the Judge and one other, were unconscious.

Little-Doc stood over these two, and gave them admonishing whacks on the shins. You may know, gentlemen, that the shins are perhaps the most sensitive part of the body. The two men howled with pain. The little corpsman raised his stick menacingly for another blow, and held it poised:

"Now," he said. "You sing . . . or else."

They sang . . . eeny, meeny, and the rest of it. The familiar sound of the chorus sent the rest of the population, which had been drawing closer because of the noise—and in spite of Doc's solitary chant—back to the village.

Little-Doc pulled a roll of bandage from his pack, all the time brandishing the stick in one hand. With this, he bound his two captives. Then he proceeded to vaccinate them, still singing.

Doc had finished all—including the ones he had knocked out—but the Judge de la Paix, and he was working on him, when a sergeant and a patrol swarmed up the hill. They had been sent out from Thomonde at the request of Foster, the aviator.

The sergeant, followed by two privates, burst in the door . . . and stopped in his tracks. He looked at the pile of assorted machetes, knives and pistols lying in the corner, where Doc had tossed them after disarming their owners. He looked at the four unconscious forms, and at the two who were still chanting insane gibberish at the top of their voices, in terror of Little-Doc's stick.

"What the hell are you doing?" asked the sergeant, as he picked up a pair of mechanics' pliers which some one had dropped on the floor in the fight . . . he looked at them curiously.

"I have just vaccinated the Judge de la Paix of Nancy la Source," said Little-Doc, straightening from his final patient. "He protested a bit at first."

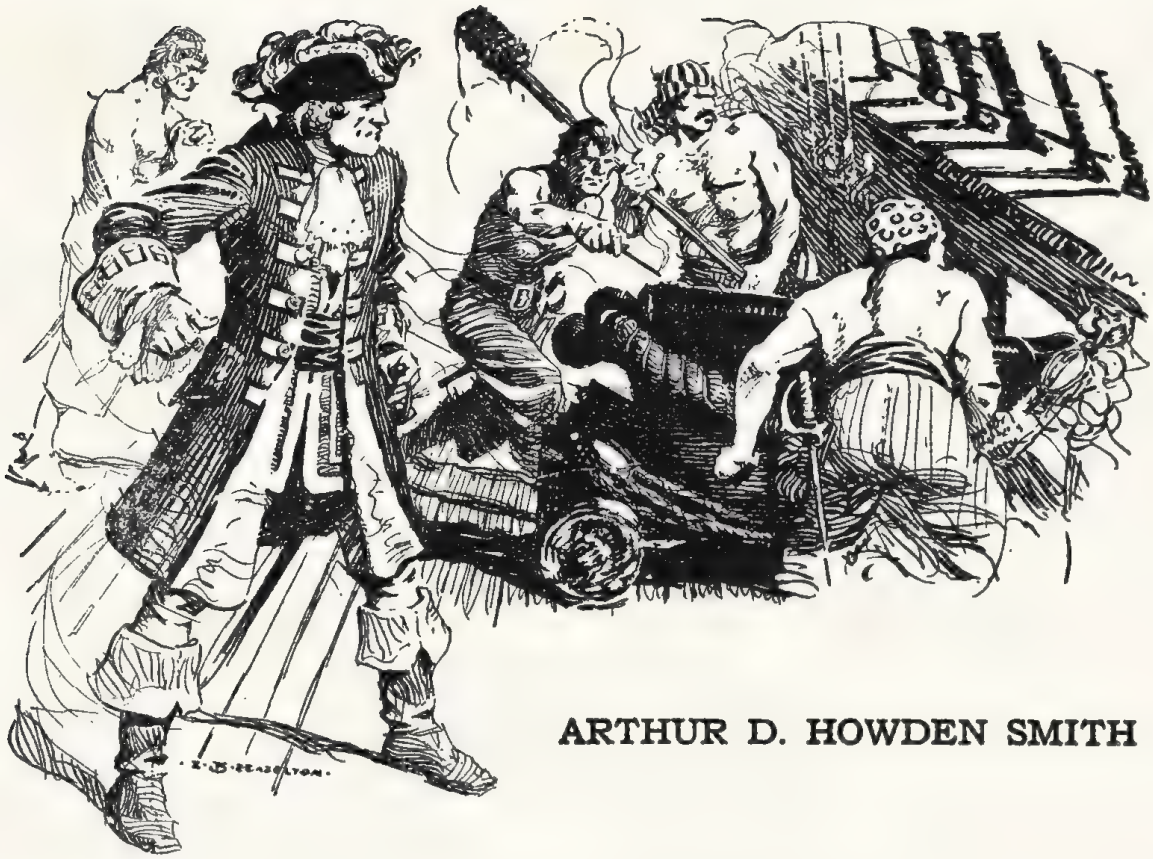
The sergeant looked again at the pliers in his hand. He strode across the room and yanked the Judge to his feet; he looked him over carefully, then dragged him over to the door where the light was better, and looked again. A peculiar expression came into the sergeant's eyes.

"Doc," he said, ominously. "You have made a slight mistake. What you mean is that you have just vaccinated Maximilian Sam, Caco chief of chiefs—the man who tortured Barlow to death with the bites of tarantulas . . . and where in the hell is your gun? How did you do it?"

"The hospital corps," said Little-Doc, and his voice was very tired, "is a noncombatant branch of the service; we don't use guns . . . besides, this stick was sufficient."

"Well I'll be damned," muttered the Sergeant. Then: "Come along, Sam! We've been looking for *you* for a long, long time." And gentlemen, the sergeant's voice was not pleasant.

"Now," said old Valois, looking far off across the bay in the direction of New York, "perhaps you will understand my wish to visit your Madison Square Garden. I wish to see this game they play; this game they call hockey—the game that taught Little-Doc Little how to subdue six armed men with a crooked stick, and to make the truly terrible Maximilian Sam howl 'eeny, meeny, miney, moe,' while he vaccinated him like a baby."



ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

CORNISH HONOR

CAPTAIN JOHN BARAGWANATH, of the snow *Bonaventure,* out of Plymouth, settled back in the sternsheets of his longboat with a forgiveable sigh of content, then hastily looked over his shoulder at his vessel, riding profitably low in the water. He had justice for his state of mind. He was almost ready for sea, and many days ahead of the other ships of the West India fleet, which crammed the harbor of Port Royal from the main shore to the flats off the sand spit of the Palisades. You might have counted upward of a hundred sail; stout Londoners and Bristolmen, smaller craft from the Cinque ports and Southampton and Biddeford and Marazion and a dozen other famous towns that mothered England's commerce overseas; still smaller craft in the local trade, and others hailing from the North American plantations. Over by the naval dockyard lay a brace of tall-sparred frigates, for there was talk of war with France, and the Port Admiral was sending a convoy with the fleet.

Shoreward, Port Royal drowsed deceptively in the heat haze, the rowdiest resort for sailormen in all the Caribbees, its low, white-walled houses nestling among palms and surrounded by luxuriant gardens. Captain Baragwanath licked his lips in anticipation, for his tongue was parched and his throat dry.

"Oh, Eden were a pleasant place, and fairer far to see," he hummed, and then turned his attention to a sharp-built ship abeam of his course whence came to his nostrils a faintly musky odor. He cocked an eyebrow toward her, and his stroke, used to his ways, explained mechanically:

"Slaver, sir. *God's Covenant,* out o' Boston in the New England plantations,

Cap'n Isaiah Dean. Landed three hundred prime blacks this day week, sir."

Captain Baragwanath wrinkled his nostrils.

"Humph," he said reflectively, "I'll say naught against another man's means o' livelihood, but I'd not be cheery living wi' yon stink."

He jerked his thumb toward a second ship, lying farther in shore, as tall-sparred as the distant frigates and nigh as heavily bulwarked, a row of lean-mouthed cannon projecting from her ports.

"And her?"

The stroke, never pausing in his labors, answered:

"The *Sorry Jest,* sir. A picaroon."

"Say a pirate, and be done wi' it, lad," Captain Baragwanath retorted. "I marvel the King's officers permit such a fellow anchorage amongst honest people. 'Tis plain against sense and reason."

The slaver was now close aboard, and he might note that she was pierced for six guns a side, with a long piece mounted on the forecastle. A boat was just about pulling away from her Jacob's ladder, a spindley figure handling the steering-oar.

"That will be Cap'n Dean, sir," vouchsafed the stroke.

Captain Baragwanath grunted noncommittally in his throat; he had no concern with the slaver's master.

The two boats were beached almost side by side, and Captain Baragwanath paused, after his had been made secure, for a final word of admonition to his crew.

"Ye'll be here at dusk, mind ye, lads, and if there's one cannot keep stroke I'll ha' the rope's end put to him."

There was a muttering of "Aye, aye, sir," and they rolled eagerly away, bent upon sampling as soon as possible the delights of the taverns and other diversions which were strewn the length of the Embarcadero.

Captain Baragwanath became aware of an alien personality at his elbow, and turned to perceive the spindling man who had steered the slaver's boat, a shriveled, matchlike person in the rusty black of a parson, whose head was all but as fleshless as a skull's, with a vulture's beak and a thin, straight mouth, at this present writhing in a smirk obviously intended for a smile.

"Your servant, sir," proclaimed the spindley man, scraping a bow. "Captain Baragwanath, I believe?" He spoke in a nasal falsetto. "May I present myself? Captain Dean, sir, Isaiah Dean, of Boston, master of the *God's Covenant.* I am berthed close by ye, sir, and it has given me vast satisfaction to observe the celerity and skill wi' which ye ha' burthened your ship. An achievement, Captain Baragwanath. There's none I honor more than a master mariner who knows his duties."

Captain Baragwanath's immediate hostility melted before this paean of praise.

"Why, that is kindly spoken, Captain Dean," he rejoined. "I ha' labored hard, 'tis true, and am now prepared to take my due reward in a small measure o' relaxation."

"As 'tis written in the book," approved Captain Dean. "The honest laborer in the vineyard alone is worthy o' his hire."

"Say ye so, say ye so?" exclaimed Baragwanath, highly pleased, but thinking upon the identity of his companion: "Ye would seem to ha' the power o' the pulpit on your tongue, my master, yet they tell me ye are a slaver."

"And why not? " returned the New Englander. "Is it not better for the poor blacks to be rescued from their heathenry, and fetched into a Christian land where they can learn to be God-fearing and ha' their nakedness clothed? For my way o' thinking, whoever aids in converting them is carrying out the principles of the true evangel."

The argument struck Captain Baragwanath as original; he was impressed.

A stocky, barrel-chested man in the typical Cornish fashion, he had the slanting, heavy-lidded eyes and mold of cheekbones suggesting an Assyrian or Semitic origin of his race. His nose, too, was prominent, and his hair black and curly. There was a simplicity about him as refreshing as the clean sea-wind blowing over his native tors.

"Now, by St. Ives," he exclaimed, "that will be a consideration I ha' ne'er took thought to! But how d'ye suffer the stink o' them, man?"

Captain Dean shrugged his thin shoulders. "I take heed that but for such as myself, Captain, they'd be collops in stew-pots as like as not. Ah, sir, it gives me pleasure whenever I see some strapping buck or wench here, decently garbed and content, and remember how I bought 'em out o' the barracoons."

"To think o' it," protested Baragwanath.

There was a moment's pause.

"Y'are a stranger to Port Royal?" propounded Dean.

"Even so," assented the Cornishman.

"Mayhap, then, ye'll permit me to be your guide?"

Baragwanath gave him a dubious look.

"Why, to say truth, sir," rejoined the Cornishman, "my concern is a mighty thirst, and I take it a man o' your religious—"

Dean waved a deprecating hand. "Sir, sir," he interrupted, "ye'll not ha' forgot how the blessed Paul bade us take a sup o' wine for the stomach's sake—although had the Apostle encountered our Jamaican rum I make no doubt he would ha' given that the preference. I am not above a dram, myself, bytimes. 'Tis an excellent specific for the climate. Will ye come wi' me?"

"Gladly, sir," Baragwanath answered heartily. "What wi' the unlading and stowing cargo, I ha' seen no more o' the town than the path to my factor's place."

"Ye ha' done well by your owners, I'd say," remarked the slaver as they strolled up the Embarcadero, thronged with sailors, planters dressed in seersucker and linen, paunchy merchants and negroes in every variety of costume and lack of costume.

"The richest cargo I ha' ever manifested," Baragwanath boasted.

"So ye'll be for home, when the convoy's ready?"

"Not I," rejoined the Cornishman. "I ha' strouds and cutlery for New York i' the forehold. I'll trade 'em for furs."

"Two ventures in the one voyage," admired Dean. "I can see, sir, y'are a man o' forethought beyond most."

He stopped in front of the *Sir Harry Morgan* tavern. The signboard bearing the likeness of the famous buccaneer hung motionless in the still air, but within-doors was a steady roar of voices and banging and clattering of jacks and flagons. As men reeled out the low doorway others poured in to take their places, and Captain Baragwanath's deep-set eyes glistened expectantly.

"A likely spot," he exclaimed.

"None better," agreed Dean, leading the way in.

THE long outer room, dim and cool after the fierce sunlight, was thick with tobacco-smoke and reeked of stale beer and rum. Scores of tar-breeks around the tables bellowed to make themselves heard.

"Drawer! Drawer!"

"And damme for an Irisher if—"

"That rum's for me, ye dirty bla'guard!"

"As sweet a bit o' flesh—"

"Drawer! Drawer!"

"Aye, on the account, mate."

"Rum, ho!"

A hairy-chested fellow, with gold rings in his ears, was standing on an upended barrel, singing *"Mary Ambree,"* and Baragwanath instinctively ducked his head as a clay-pipe swished by his ear.

"Full up, 'twould seem," he shouted to his guide. But Dean ploughed ahead through the din, answering in his falsetto:

"Backroom—where gentry—"

A door swung to his touch, and they entered a second room slightly less crowded, with windows giving upon the harbor and the dense tiers of shipping. Here, there was less noise. Baragwanath caught a whiff of Varena smoke, the pungent bouquet of sack and rarer wines. He could see that the men clustered at the tables were richly dressed, many of them in the uniforms of the King's service. Dean cast a hasty glance about him, then started toward a table next a window whence came the clack of dice.

"There's a main to watch," he muttered in his companion's ear. "Ye'll see stakes will rival Whitehall's."

A tall, dark man in a laced coat of puce velvet, wearing a golden quetzal bird in his feathered hat, was making the cast, and Baragwanath caught his breath at sight of the stacks of golden coins.

There was not a piece of silver on the table. The others in the main were leaning forward eagerly in their chairs. Only the caster seemed undisturbed, a suspicion of a mocking smile lightening his swarthy features.

The dice rolled from his fingers, *click-etty-clack,* danced madly for a moment and came to rest. The watchers sank back in their chairs with a burst of laughter, which startled Baragwanath.

"May Satan burn me, he has lost!" cried one. And another: "No, Paradene, ha' ye lost the magic touch? Pox me, but I'll sleep easier this night!"

"Not easier than I," retorted the man of the quetzal bird, pushing a huge, tinkling pile to the table's center. "Strange as ye may think it, gentles, there's no savor to gambling save a man lose his share."

Dean, standing beside Baragwanath, his little eyes fastened avidly upon the gleaming coins, whispered in the Cornishman's ear:

" 'Tis a man finds it all but impossible to cast for loss—and will ye credit me, sir, he'll seldom play!"

"Who is he?"

"No, then, ye shall be presented," the slaver replied officiously, "but first—"

"He dropped a hand on the shoulder of a man in planter's dress who sat to the loser's left.

"By your leave, Mr. Custance," he said fawningly. "I'll even applaud your good fortune."

The planter turned to regard him with an insolent stare, the character of which escaped Baragwanath's notice, awed as he was by this display of what seemed to him extraordinary wastefulness.

"Ah, Captain Dean," the planter answered, and shifting position contrived to dislodge the slaver's hand. "Y'are still in port, eh?"

"I trust those last blacks were satisfactory, sir," fawned Dean.

"I believe my overseer has found no substantial fault wi' them," Custance replied coldly.

Undeterred, Captain Dean motioned to his companion.

"My friend, Captain Baragwanath, of the snow *Bonaventure,* sir. Mr. Custance, Captain, of Custance Place, as fair a plantation as ye'll find in the upcountry."

Custance rose, and bowed courteously, and perceiving what manner of man was the seaman, returned kindly: "I ha' heard tell o' ye, Captain Baragwanath. Y'are said to ha' made a rare profit on your voyage hither."

"Why, sufficient, sir," beamed Baragwanath. " 'Tis good o' ye to take heed to such small affairs."

The remainder of the group at the table had been discussing the last main, but at the mention of Baragwanath's name the man of the quetzal bird turned his head suddenly and stared fixedly at the sailor.

"Your pardon, sir," he said, "but I dare swear y'are Cornish born."

"And rightly, sir," replied Baragwanath in his hearty way.

The questioner stood quickly, doffing his splendid hat, and before the slaver could intervene offered his hand.

"My name is Paradene, sir," he said, "Captain Paradene, and always at the service of a Cornishman."

Baragwanath flushed with pleasure as he accepted Paradene's hand, flattered, also, to be noticed by so distinguished a person, who tossed about golden onzas and spade-guineas as though they were shillings.

"Why, sir," he said, "I take that mighty kind o' ye. But would ye—" he hesitated shyly—"would ye be o' the Paradenes o' Penhallow?"

Paradene nodded, smiling—and he seldom was known to smile.

"St. Michael my aid!" cried Baragwanath. "There was a rhyme people said when I was a boy:

> "When Penhallow lacks a Paradene
> St. Michael's Mount will ne'er be seen."

Paradene's lambent eyes, soft now, yet capable of hardening to the hue of basalt, were very sad.

"I remember," he agreed, "but ye'd best look to the Mount next time ye pass it. I misdoubt me the Paradenes are quit o' Penhallow." His tone brightened. "But a truce to old wives' distiches, man. 'Tis seldom I meet wi' one o' the dark breed from home. Do me the honor of cracking a stoup of wine wi' me."

He turned to the others at the table.

"Your pardon, sirs," he said. "If ye'll permit me I'll ha' a thread o' words wi' Captain Baragwanath, here, and take my revenge anon."

And very formally, he presented the master of the *Bonaventure* to all his friends, naming them one by one the while Dean stirred restlessly and plucked at his stock, awaiting an opportunity to project himself into the conversation. But that was unnecessary, for Baragwanath immediately spoke up sturdily in his behalf.

"I had thought ye were acquainted wi' Captain Dean, gentles," he said.

"Oh, are," Pardene assented dryly, "we are—acquainted wi' Captain Dean. A good day to ye, Captain."

The murmured acknowledgements which echoed him were equally noncommittal, but again Baragwanath in his bluff simplicity, failed to notice this, and Dean trotted after the two as Paradene led the way to a nearby table.

"A great pleasure to meet ye again, Captain Paradene," he asserted nasally. "I trust your last venture was a successful as usual."

"Well enough," Paradene answered shortly, and motioned to a drawer, who came to take their orders.

Skillfully, and without apparent intent, he gradually froze the slaver out of the conversation, until, having finished his wine, Dean rose and excused himself.

"I'll be hereabouts, Captain Baragwanath," he said, "if I can be of aid to ye. Call on me, sir, I beg ye."

"That I will," responded the Cornishman, "and I thank ye, sir, for giving me occasion to meet wi' a fellowcountryman in this far land. I'll seek ye out, sir, never fear."

So Dean bowed himself out, and Paradene continued talking of half-forgotten manors on the moors and fishing villages nestling under beetling cliffs until the slaver was out of earshot. Then he leaned over the table closer to Baragwanath.

"Tell me, sir," he said, "ha' ye known this man Dean for long?"

"For long?" repeated Baragwanath. "Why, I met him but a scant hour since."

Paradene clicked a finger in relief.

"That's well," he said. "Ye must know, my friend, the fellow, aside from the filthy trade he professes—"

"But," exclaimed Baragwanath, be-

wildered, "why d'ye call his trade 'filthy'? Sure, 'tis better that these poor, black wretches should be saved from cannibalism and heathen practices, and—"

"That's his story," put in Paradene. "And there's a moiety o' sense to it. But I'll ask ye: would ye go slaving, yourself, Captain?"

"Why—why, I never thought o' it, sir, in that way."

"I'll answer for ye," Paradene exclaimed decisively. "Ye would not. Yet I ha' known slavers I'd consort wi' on occasion. The worst blight on yon rogue is not his cargoes o' black ivory, but the suspicion that he practices piracy when the opportunity offers. He is no man for your intimacy, sir. Be advised o' that. And if he cultivates ye, 'tis best ye should beware his motive."

BARAGWANATH stared uncomprehendingly at the other.

"But he would seem a decent, religious body." he protested. "And if he is a pirate—" he drank deeply of his wine—"why do not the King's officers hang him as they should?"

"For that it has never been proven," Paradene retorted. "But there are ugly tales o' him, and one like myself is in a position to judge o' their justice."

"And why one like yourself?" Baragwanth inquired innocently.

Paradene smiled indulgently—"I see ye ha' scant knowledge o' the diverse practices prevailing in these seas," he expounded. "Know, sir, that there be various and sundry divers grades o' gentry 'on the Account,' as the saying is, and we—"

The group at the next table were breaking up, and as they left the room several called farewells to Paradene.

"A' God's mercy for your ill-luck, Captain Paradene!"

"I'll expect ye for dinner, Paradene—calapush and upland mutton."

"Best leave the dice, Diccon!"

"Aye, Diccon lad! And the sea, too. The picaroon doesn't live can throw ambs ace, and prosper."

They swaggered forth, their plumes sweeping the rafters, rapiers rattling at their heels. Paradene, still smiling, bent his gaze once more upon Baragwanath. He was surprised to observe the expression of mingled consternation and loathing, tinged with disbelief, which was taking shape in his brother Cornishman's face.

"God save us," exclaimed Baragwanath. "Ye're never him they call Long Diccon the Picaroon?"

Paradene paused to light a *cigarro,* a faint flicker of amusement in his eyes.

"Aye, so," he admitted. Baragwanath pushed his chair from the table, and the consternation and disbelief faded from his homely, blunt features, leaving horrified amazement in their stead.

"Paradene," he said unsteadily. "I might ha' known it! I ha' heard o' ye. Long Diccon the Picaroon! And ye denounce yon Dean for piracy, who does naught worse than support the stink o' unwashed blacks for the salvation o' their souls. God save us, sir! 'Tis a poor ploy for one Cornish born."

"Ye think so?" rejoined Paradene, unruffled. "I fear me, man, y'have listened to sorry tales. I spoil the Dons and the Portugals, but d'ye think the King's people here would permit me to bring the *Sorry Jest* into Port Royal if I did worse?"

"Ye say, yourself, they ha' no proof against Captain Dean, for all your charge against him," Baragwanath countered shrewdly.

"A different matter," said Paradene.

"And why?" demanded the shipmaster. "I ha' never heard word o' him, but they talk o' ye from here to Bristol."

"And when did sailormen not love to weave bold yarns?" demanded Paradene. He tapped off the ashes of his *cigarro.* "Be advised, my friend—"

"No friend to such as ye," Baragwanath interjected violently. The unaccus-

tomed wine was fire in his veins. "I hold there be no difference betwixt sea-robbers, however they dub themselves—pirates, picaroons, buccaneers, they are all alike cut out o' the same pattern." He jumped to his feet. "And so I'll take leave o' ye, and hope 'twill be my fortune not to cross wakes wi' ye at sea."

Paradene rose after him, lithely, commandingly. There was a sternness in the picaroon's demeanor which checked the *Bonaventure's* master.

"Y'are witless, man," rapped Paradene. "I ha' sought to preserve from a plight—aye, from a death—ye will not see. What? Y'are blind, I say. This canting fellow who fetched ye here will cheerily murder ye and all your crew."

"And yourself?" parried Baragwanath. "Am I a fool to steer wide o' one o' your repute."

Paradene dropped back in his chair.

"Oh, go your way," he sighed. "If ye'll take a New England slaver, wi' the skull-and-crossbones in his flag locker—Ah, well, go your way!"

"That will I," asserted Baragwanath, and stalked into the outer room in search of Isaiah Dean.

Paradene wiped his mouth thoughtfully on a laced kerchief, which had been stitched for him my Solita, the girl Port Royal called the Spanish Jade—albeit she was neither Spanish nor a jade, in strict truth, but rather the best friend a man could have.

"Mayhap, I should bear in mind that we Cornishfolk are a cantankerous race," he murmured to himself. "Yet I'll swear Dean is up to no good. Ahwelladay, Diccon lad, ye can't ha' all the fruit o' the tree, and not find some unripe. So much for reputation!"

He dismissed the matter from his mind, and went about his own business, of which he had aplenty to occupy him, for he was the farthest ranging and most diligent of the picaroons, Brethren of the Coast or buccaneers, who continued, under the half-hearted protection of the King's colonial authorities, to sap the lifeblood of Spain's commerce—a private warfare men justified alone by Spanish greed and unwillingness to share the profits of the rich lands which covered most of the New World.

In the course of the evening, however, Paradene received more than one report of Baragwanath's exploits along the Embarcadero. The Cornishman, with Dean trailing him like an evil shadow, was wandering from tavern to tavern, tossing off rum by the dram, wine by the flagon, ale by the jack. And wherever he went, he denounced Paradene for a pirate, who sought to mask his murderous career under a word which had the same meaning.

"And the rascal calls himself a Cornishman, sirs. Aye, gentles, a Paradene of Penhallow! I'm—I'm—Cor-cornish-born! I'm—I'm hon-hon'ble Cornishman! 'Known o' Paradenes ever since—breeched. 'Ever hear sa-saying?" And standing in the middle of the pleased taproom he would declaim:

> "When Penhallow lacks a Paradene
> St. Michael's Mount will ne'er be seen.

" 'Ter-terrible thing, gentles, Paradene—pirates. May I lose m' spars, Cornish pirate! Much worse!"

"And what says Dean?" Long Diccon inquired, amused. "Oh," quoth his informant, "the dog makes play to stop him, upon the which he launches a sermon reciting the beauties of the slave-trade."

"Lieutenant Airey, of the Port Admiral's staff, interjected:

"The fellow's no gentleman, to be sure, but ye'd best give him warning, Paradene or else have him out."

The picaroon fixed the officer with an insolent stare.

"Certainly not," he answered.

"And why not?" stammered Lieutenant Airey. "Your honor is aspersed, sir. If this comes to the admiral's ears—"

"Richard Paradene's honor can not

be so easily aspersed, sir," Paradene stated gently. "And for the admiral—I suspect we understand each other."

Nor would he say any more.

THE following afternoon he was turning into Duke of Albemarle Street intent to call upon Solita, who was dearer to him than any object in the world, unless it was his proud ship, the *Sorry Jest,* when he overheard a blare of voices—Solita's: "I say no, no, no!"

And Dean's unforgettable falsetto:

"But I put it to ye, ma'am, here is Captain Baragwanath, who is seeing the sights o' the town: the *Harry Morgan,* Sir Harry's grave—"

"Pirate, too, that one," boomed Baragwanath. "Called himself buccaneer, but *I* say all same thing—buccaneer, picaroon, pirate. Robbers! Murderers! Sea-rogues!"

Solita again:

" 'Ow foolish, thees man! Take him away."

But lurking behind a palm, Diccon heard the slaver press on: "— the Dockyard and Admiralty House and o' course, ma'am, yourself."

Solita laughed contemptuously. When she was in humor her laughter was like silver chimes. Now, it had the clang of sword-blades in it.

"Solita ees not for such as you, you steal the poor black people to sell—and Solita ees not for men who come to her 'ouse drunk. Go away!"

Long Diccon heard the firm stamp of her santalded foot on the threshold, and judged it was time he appeared.

He swung around the corner, with his hand on his rapier-hilt. "What's toward, little one?" he cried. "Oh, 'tis Master Dean—and Captain Baragwanath, the doughty Cornishman. Certes, ye'll not annoy Mistress Solita, sirs."

His voice was very gentle, but his eyes were hard, doom's hard. Dean averted his own gaze, and shifted feet awkwardly, muttering:

"No offense, Captain Paradene. A friendly call."

Diccon could tell he had been drinking only by the inflamed spots over each cheekbone and the watery look to his eyes. Baragwanath, swaying loosely, fumbled for the hanger at his belt.

"Fight ye on that," he mouthed. "Oh, no, ye'll not," Diccon answered evenly. "If ye please, Master Dean, I'll ha' a word wi' the gentleman." And he drew Barangwanath to one side. "Sir, sir," he said earnestly, "will ye not see how misguided ye are?' This is no employment for such as you. I tell ye this man means ye no good. Be advised, sir—"

Baragwanath lurched away from him. "Take your hand off me," growled the Cornishman. " 'M good as any damned pirate. Don't care what he calls himself."

Diccon's voice cracked out at Dean like a whip: "Be off wi' him, sirrah! And Mistress Solita will not be annoyed. Ye understand?"

Dean nodded sulkily, and tugged at his dupe's arm. The pair wandered clumsily up the street, their heads close together.

Solita linked her arms around one of Diccon's . "Ah, my Deeccon," she breathed, "weethout you, what would I do?" She kissed him gayly, then became serious. "The dark man, 'e was drunk, but 'e ees not bad. But that Dean, oh, 'e ees bad, bad bad! Heem Solita does not trust, Deeccon."

"We agree on many things, Solita mia," he assented, and led her into the house.

TWO days later, he had occasion to see Isaac Mendez, the wise old Spanish Jew, who was his factor, handling all the business affairs which grew out of the investment of the prize-money he earned in his sea-ventures. A handsome

ancient, the Jew, with the demeanor of a prince and a bitter hatred in his heart for the Spaniards, who had oppressed his people and finally cast them out to wander the earth.

"What is this I hear o' ye, Diccon?" the old man demanded straightway. "That there is a wild Englishman, who goes up and down the town denouncing ye for a pirate, and for better measure consorts himself with this rogue, Dean, the Boston man?"

Diccon explained what had happened, and Mendez tugged at the white beard which flowed down over his great chest. "Ha' ye a fondness for the man Baragwanath?" he asked suddenly.

Diccon shrugged.

"No—unless it be that he comes from the same corner of England as myself. We are a race apart, we Cornishmen." A sly twinkle gleamed in his eye. "They say of us that we come of your people, Isaac."

"Mayhap that is one reason I ha' such a fondness for ye, my son," Mendez answered calmly. He tugged at his beard again, and as suddenly as before queried: "Ha' ye heard that Baragwanath and Dean will sail in company for New York?"

Diccon checked his prowling gait—"'Sdeath, no," he exclaimed. "When?"

"The day after the morrow."

Diccon pondered. "Y'ha' no doubt o' Dean's villainy?" he asked

"If I could prove it I'd walk to Government House as fast as the sun would let me," rejoined the Jew.

Diccon caught up his hat. "Belike, I am a fool, Isaac," he said, "but Baragwanath is a good fellow. And there'll be Cornishmen in his crew. I may not suffer this."

"Tell them at Admiralty House," suggested Mendez.

"Those pompous fops!" derided the picaroon.

"They'd say, first, I was moved by spite for what was said o' me. And at bare sight o' a frigate in chase, Dean would haul his wind and be off. No, no! 'Tis in part the repute Baragwanath had o' me that lured him into the trap. My honor is at stake, Isaac. 'Tis for me to see him safe."

The Jew smiled benevolently. "Ah, you Gentiles, and your talk of honor," he mocked. "But y'are in the right, son Diccon, only, I prithee, waste as little time and effort as may be."

GRADUALLY, during that night and the next, Diccon and his bosun, Dick Whitticombe, collected the roystering crew of the *Sorry Jest* and smuggled them decks, all save the usual watch, and with copious bribes of rum to keep them contented. None was surprised; it was not unusual for the *Sorry Jest* to sail on short notice. And if tavernkeepers grumbled because there was a slacking-off in trade, the harbor as a whole had no idea that one blast of Whitticombe's whistle would cover her yards with canvas. She rode to her anchor, trig and point-device, but quiet as a church, when the *Bonaventure* and the *God's Covenant* made sail with the ebb and stood out past the fort on the point, dipping their ensigns and firing a salute which was answered by most of the West Indiamen, awaiting impatiently the stowage of their cargoes. Nor was there sign of life aboard her until the two other vessels had rounded the Palisades and were hull-down on the horizon. Then Whitticombe's whistle shrilled, and the ratlines teemed with men.

Diccon was in no hurry. He knew the sharp-built New Englander would have to cut her pace to the snow's, and also, he was confident the *Sorry Jest* could foot it as well as the *God's Covenant*. For the rest, he made certain that Dean, whatever the slaver plotted, would not dare to attempt anything in neighboring seas where there was always chance of encountering a King's cruiser.

So the *Sorry Jest* advantaged herself of the last of the ebb, and boxed the Palisades to find ahead a stretch of water tumbling empty to the limit of vision. The course was plain before him: around the southern coast of the island, then nor'west for the Straits of Florida.

He had every confidence in his instinct for picking up a watery trail, once he knew his quarry's objective. Crack on sail through the night; in the morning lookouts at every masthead; allow for varying winds, for the snow's lubberliness. If he failed, after all—. Well, he had done what he could.

In the morning, they ran down a Grand Cayman sloop, packed with choice scoundrels, who would gladly have avoided them—who, indeed, were so relieved to find that the *Sorry Jest* was not a cruiser that they readily described two vessels they had sighted in company the previous evening.

On this course?

Aye, sir, on this course.

It was mid-afternoon of the following day that the lookouts sighted a blur of white on the horizon, and Diccon shortened sail until dusk. With the coming of darkness he spread all the yards could carry, and spent the night wrapped in his cloak on the deck beside the helmsman, rousing at times to check the wind and the course. The dawn brought his reward: two ships fair away, a point or two on the larboard beam, rising mainyard high against the sunrise glow.

Drinking the mulled sack a Negro fetched him, he wondered if Dean would run for it; but it was soon evident the slaver saw no reason to suspect the strange sail astern. The two ships held on their course undeviatingly for half a dozen glasses by which time Dean, at least, must have recognized the *Sorry Jest's* rig.

Then they closed, and after an interval showed their colors, and the snow fired a gun to leeward. Diccon, smiling grimly, bade his helmsman yaw and ran up the ensign and likewise fired a gun to leeward.

"Let ye worry for that, Master Dean," he said to himself. And aloud: "Master Gunner, ye may cast loose the batteries. Topmen aloft, but we'll not come to boarding. I'd not waste a life on that swine could I help it."

Another glass, and he could see that the gunports were triced up on both vessels. The *Sorry Jest* was snoring through the water, tossing the spray over her bows so heavily that the men at the forecastle guns must cup the ventholes to protect the priming, dousing the muzzles of the maindeck culverins on the lee side. As she foamed up abaft the two in chase Diccon gave word to take in canvas—the great lateen sail on the mizzen was furled, the mainsail was backed and he headed in betwixt the *Bonaventure* and *God's Covenant* under foresail and topsails.

Baragwanath sprang on the weather bulwarks of the snow, shaking his clenched fish.

"Ye whelp o' Hell," he shouted, his voice coming thinly against the wind. "I'll show ye how honest Cornishmen will fight!"

"I mean ye no harm," hailed Diccon. "Lie to, and—"

But the words were taken out of his mouth by a blast of fire to starboard. The picaroon spun around to see *God's Covenant* wrapped in smoke as the roundshot thudded into his craft; he had a momentary glimpse of Isaiah Dean grimacing on the slaver's poop.

Simultaneously, a second broadside came from the *Bonaventure*—and if her guns were small they were well-laid; one shot topped the bulwarks, scattering splinters which brought down two men.

"Master Gunner," called Diccon, "ye'll loose on the slaver. Let be the snow. Yarely, lads!"

The *Sorry Jest* leaped under his feet as the starboard battery was discharged,

the big culverins firing at point blank range. Peering through the smoke, Diccon could see several jagged rents in the slaver's side, but her fire continued undiminished, and a second broadside from the *Bonaventure* snapped shrouds and stays and dismounted a swivel at the break of the poop even as a musket-ball seared his shoulder. It was an impossible situation, to be under fire from two antagonists on either beam, one of which he must deny himself the advantage of engaging. Diccon mopped the blood from his coat, and hailed Whitticombe:

"Bosun! We'll stand by to go about."

THE towering smoke-clouds, piling thicker and thicker, veiled his maneuver, and both the snow and the slaver, caught unawares, ran on ahead of him. Then the *Sorry Jest* wore smartly, and pointing up into the wind jockeyed the weather-gauge from the *God's Covenant,* which had the effect of partially blanketing the *Bonaventure's* fire. All three vessels were clear of the smoke, and as the *Sorry Jest* went about again Dean, who was no mean sailor, comprehended what was in store for him and tried desperately to avoid it, keeping off as much as possible.

But nothing he could do might avail him. Diccon had ordered the mizzen canvas unfurled, and was racing down upon a course which would fetch him across the slaver's stern, meanwhile pecking away with his chase-guns on the chance of crippling a spar.

The realization of what those long culverins in the *Sorry Jest's* broadside batteries would do to him from a raking position was too much for Isaiah Dean's stomach. He had had already a bellyful of punishment. More than the Cornishman's cargo could be worth.

Well, there was one alternative—if Long Diccon would let him take it. Otherwise, it was a question of fighting his ship under, for he swore to himself he wouldn't live to be hanged. To hell with Baragwanath! He broke every sail from its stops, squared off and ran for it, the broad waters of the Gulf to westward a haven of safety if he might keep his lead until darkness, a smear of smoke and brimstone in his wake as though the doors of hell had parted for him, as Whitticombe remarked, adding:

"Ye'll not chase, Master Diccon?"

"Not I," returned Diccon. "Had I commision o' admiralty I would, and hang him from his yardarm—and if he ever shows his face in Port Royal again I'll try for it there. But now we must reckon our own losses, bosun, and ha' words wi' yon stubborn Cornishman has put us to all this trouble."

"Why, 'twas cheap enough for so brisk a bicker, your honor," Whitticombe answered cheerfully. "Two lads for shark-bait, and five for Master Cirrurgeon. And barring a few shot in the sides, and cut stay or two, not a particle o' harm to the lass' self."

"Good," said Diccon. "We'll see if Captain Baragwanath has come to his senses. Easy said, bosun, and bid the men keep under cover."

The *Bonaventure* had made no effort to escape. She lay to, rocking gently on the swell, her bulwarks lined with curious faces, Baragwanath striding nervously up and down the poop. Diccon satisfied himself the Cornishman had no thought of firing into him, and slipped the *Sorry Jest* within hailing distance of the snow.

"Come aboard, sir," he called. "I'd ha' words wi' ye."

"And what o' my ship," roared Baragwanath. "How know I ye'll suffer me to return to her. I'll fight an enemy nigh my own weight, but I can't risk my men's lives needlessly against a private frigate, if that's how ye style yourself."

Diccon's jaw squared. "I'll call ye to mind, sir," he answered sternly, "I ha' lost the lives o' two stout fellows I could

ill spare to save ye from your own stupidness. And I'll ask ye just one question: ha' I thrown one shot into ye?"

Baragwanath swallowed hard. "Belike, ye'd take my ship whole,' he returned finally. " 'Tis a sweet craft."

"Come aboard sir," Diccon told him shortly.

They met on the *Sorry Jest's* poop, and one of Diccon's cabin negroes was there with two flagons of spiced wine. The picaroon motioned to the two still forms lashed in canvas in the waist.

"There's a portion o' the price I ha' paid for ye," he said, "let alone the inconvenience o' dropping my own affairs to shepherd ye."

"Oh, ye had your reasons for it, no doubt," Baragwanath answered sullenly.

"Say ye so," rejoined Diccon. "And since when was it a point o' Cornish honor to begrudge gratitude to the man who saved ye for that ye were a Cornishman—and honest?"

"I—I ha' heard tales o'ye," faltered Baragwanath.

"Aye, and none of the slaver, who would ha' taken your ship and slain ye and every man o' yours," said Diccon.

"Would he so?" Baragwanath queried. almost childishly.

"Why d'ye thing he advised ye to fire into me—and fired, himself, wi'out a shot from me? Why d'ye think he made off as he did? I tell ye, sir, the knave's a slaver by ordinary, and a pirate, a robber and murderer of his own people as occasion serves."

Diccon's gaze sought the deck below where groups of men were scrubbing ugly red stains from the planks.

"But I speak to no purpose," he continued. "Go your ways, Captain Baragwanath. Y'are safe from Dean, at the least. And I counsel ye to be wiser in your judgments o' men."

Baragwanath turned away, perhaps to counceal the moisture in his heavy-lidded eyes. There was no sound for a while but the harping of the wind in the cordage overhead and the lapping of the waves against the *Sorry Jest's* hull. Then the Cornishman turned back abruptly.

"Captain Paradene, sir," he said simply, and his rugged brown face was working spasmodically, "I ha' done ye wrong. I ask your pardon, sir. And for the men y'have lost or are hurted, why, sir, money is small recompense for life or limb, but here's all I ha', and if ye'd ha' more I'll find it, come I safe home to Plymouth."

He drew from his pockets two bags which clinked faintly.

"I brought it, thinking I might ransom my ship from ye," he went on, "and for that, too, I crave your pardon, sir."

Long Diccon shook his head smilingly. "Keep your money, sir. We, who go on the Account, as the saying is, maintain sums for such purposes. But that was bravely spoken, Captain Baragwanath. The slate is wiped clean betwixt us." He offered his hand. "And now a toast to a prosperous voyage for ye, sir! Your most obedient!"

Baragwanath tossed off the flagon at a gulp. "And to ye, Captain Paradene. I'll take leave to spread a new sort o' tale o' ye. Aye, and I'll give credit to the old distich—how goes it?" He chuckled, and recited the couplet:

> "When Penhallow lacks a Paradene
> St. Michael's Mount will ne'er be seen."

But Long Diccon's face was unduly somber—"Remember, I bade ye look close for the Mount whiles ye stand inshore," he advised, "for that day is come. A sad tale they'll spin ye in any Cornish village—and one I'd forget."

He spoke with a fine dignity, and for some reason the years dropped off Baragwanath's shoulders. He was once more a fisher lad, Paradene a son of the manor. He ducked his head.

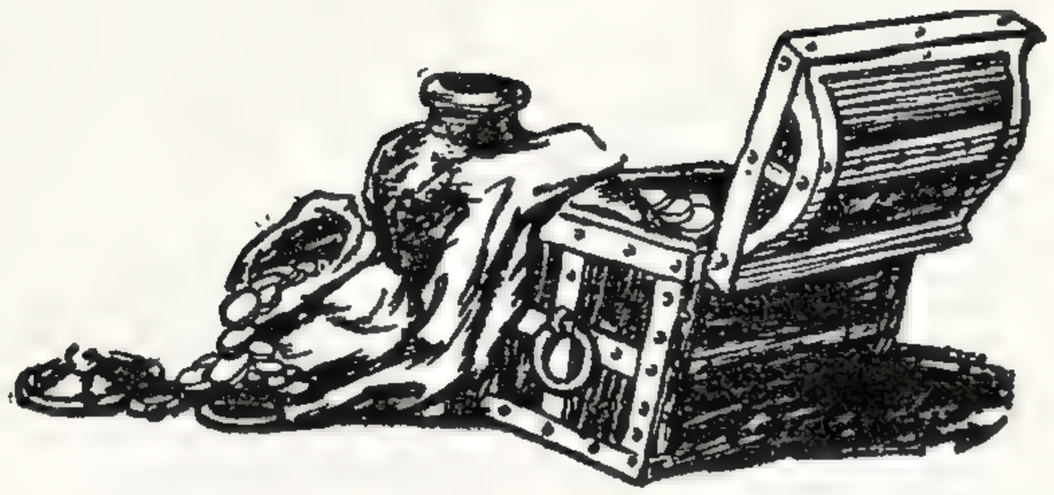
"Sorry to hear it, your honor," he

mumbled. " 'Servant, sir. Always happy to oblige."

But Paradene saw him overside as one captain would another, very stately and courteous. And afterward the picaroon leaned on the bulwarks, and watched the *Bonaventure* dwindle into a white speck against the blue of the sky. He would gladly have exchanged places with Baragwanath. In that close-coupled moment of time he would have given all he possessed for a glimpse of the Cornish cliffs, the feel of the Cornish moors underfoot. But presently he forced himself out of the trance, and beckoned Whitticombe.

"Set a course for Hispaniola," he said. "We must strive for a profit this cruise, had. Honor is a valuable commodity, we are instructed, yet it commands but a cheap price in the market-place. So we'll hover off San Domingo, and see can we bait a Don. Oh, and a double ration of rum for all hands, bosun."

"Aye, aye, sir," acknowledged Whitticombe, "and by your leave, I'll just ha' up Master Chirurgeon to see to that shoulder, sir."



A WILDERNESS DEBT

By PAUL ANNIXTER

ALL afternoon Bill Handy had been burrowing through the spruce bottoms in search of a stray heifer. It was as he turned homeward, an hour before dusk, that he came upon Alfred. As he broke from the thickets into an open glade, he saw a gangling, wobbly-kneed elk calf go staggering uncertainly off through the brush, stumbling from moment to moment on its long, stilty legs.

The youngster had been standing over something that lay sprawled and bloody in a thicket, and as Bill hastened forward he ripped out a number one oath. The thing in the brush was the carcass of a freshly-killed elk cow. Bill was a hunter and trapper by profession, but he had his idea of a man who would bring down a mother with a sucking calf.

A small band of six elk had been passing over the ridge of the mountain when the cow had been shot. The remainder of the herd had broken and fled back the way they had come—so said the signs of the trail. All, that is, but the calf of the fallen cow. The poacher, whoever he was, had carried away with him a hind quarter of the kill with him. As Handy studied the ground for other tell-tale signs, the brush snapped close beside him, and there stood the orphaned calf, teetering on its uncertain legs. A wet, quivering muzzle was thrust out of the bushes, two bat-like ears above it, as the youngster investigated Handy's sleeve.

Bill held out a horny hand and had a finger licked and sucked.

"Pore little cuss, he's half starved,"

he muttered. "Can't be a mite over two months old. If I leave him here he'll be killed by the varmints or starve. Reckon I'll have to take him along home."

Over his shoulder Bill carried a rope and a rude halter, meant for the recalcitrant heifer. This he fastened about the calf's long muzzle and started down trail toward his cabin on the Coldwater. Two or three times the youngster pulled back on the rope and blatted miserably, eyes turning along the back trail; but his thoughts of his fallen parent seemed to dim with distance. Presently he was following willingly enough in the wake of his new friend. Bill never dreamed that he had tied his rope that afternoon to a peculiar destiny that was to change the trend of his days.

The rough cowshed behind the cabin, flanked by a log pen where Handy kept his cow, made a good shelter for the orphan. When the brindle cow came in from the woods at dusk, however, the little elk strongly resented her intrusion. Circling and stamping with his diminutive forehoofs, now feinting a retreat, now rearing with arched neck, his hornless forehead butting against her flank, the youngster drove the astonished cow into a corner of the pen and held her there. When the brindle lowered her head and shook her horns in rising wrath, the calf aided his bunts with flailing forefeet, punching out with dazzling rapidity. Bill looked on with burning interest and slapped his thigh.

"Reg'lar little he-cuss, he is," he muttered. "Reckon I'll call him—call him Alfred," he blundered amid hazy memories of history. "He's a fighter from the ground up an' he's goin' to be great."

He gave over the cow pen to the calf that night and set about building an addition for the old brindle. At sea as to how to feed the orphan, Bill tried him first on milk in a bottle, then in a pan—but both the youngster spurned.

"He's either weaned proper or he smells old Blossom in her milk," Bill opined, and tried Alfred alternately on an armful of hay, some lumps of salt and sugar and a sliced rutabaga. Alfred sampled each with mild interest; then, as Bill cut himself a chew from his dark, pocket-polished tobacco plug, the calf's enquiring muzzle sought out the tobacco with every sign of keenest pleasure.

"Cracky!" said Bill admiringly. He had seen horses and burros with a penchant for tobacco, but had never dreamed that any wild creature would have a taste for the weed. He cut off another piece for himself and the pair of them, gazing solemnly at one another, had a fraternal chew together.

Up to that moment Bill's attitude toward the calf had been entirely tentative. He had figured on turning the youngster loose after a few months, or possibly giving him over to some wild game park commission. The incident of the tobacco, however, changed Alfred's destiny.

Next day Bill devoted himself largely to making better friends with his queer companion and working out his daily diet according to his lights. To his delight, and quite in line with his idea of making a he-man out of his pet, Alfred continued to eat solid food, and his penchant for tobacco persisted. As Bill approached that afternoon with a generous chew in his cheek, Alfred caught the sweet, licorice flavor of the plug and bunted Bill's pockets with an inquisitive nose until he was rewarded with a small piece of his own.

The following morning Bill sat on his doorstep repairing some traps for the coming fur season. It was October. In another week fox and mink furs, on which Bill made a meager living, would be starting to prime. As he worked he watched the antics of Alfred in his pen. The calf had become as docile and affectionate as any dog. And that sapping loneliness and sense of isolation that lies

like a dread weight upon men winter-bound in the green timber bothered Bill less than ever before this year. Alfred as he grew, was going to be a heap of company.

A SHADOW fell abruptly athwart the threshold. Bill looked up into the bearded face of his nearest neighbor, Sled McKinnon, a trapper and hide-hunter who lived some three miles to the north. It was like McKinnon to appear silently and unexpectedly like this on his way to the town in the valley. Leaning his rifle against the log wall, the hide-hunter stood watching Alfred cutting calfish capers in his pen.

"Goin' to bring him up," Bill explained. "Some damn poacher shot his mother a couple days back." He looked at McKinnon's face narrowly, but the other gave no sign.

"Yessir, he's goin' to toughen up and have real guts to him, that calf is," Bill ran on. "I call him Alfred. He chaws tobacca already. Eats it, he does. Don't bother to drool an' spit. Reckon he'll take up smokin', too, pretty soon."

"Humph," said the dour McKinnon, who had not even a smoker's respite from the taciturn glumness of a hermit. "What ye want to keep a young calf animal for, anyhow? Turn him into smoked meat an' lay him away, 's what I'd be doin.' "

Bill snorted. "I'd be a cussed cannibal an' meaner'n a shote to do that after savin' him the way I did. He thinks I'm his parent now. Besides, he's goin' to be a heap o' company. Mighty little company a man has up here—with neighbors that hole up an' suck their paws all winter. I figure Alfred's goin' to be real entertainin' while he's growin' up—"

"Happen he'll entertain ye before an' behind when them horns of his grows out," said McKinnon. "A full-growed bull elk proddin' an' proggin' is peaceable as a wild catamount."

"I'll risk that," said Bill huffily.

"You might think a heap different about it if Nate Strode, the deer warden, finds him on yore place." McKinnon took up his rifle.

"Here, leave that pack lay," said Bill gruffly. "Dinner's on the stove. Come inside and dangle your whiskers in some real victuals for a change."

McKinnon snorted in a different key by way of acceptance. Bill had no liking for the hide-hunter nor his unsavory calling. The self-centeredness that comes of age and isolation made McKinnon a dour and contentious companion, but Bill's sense of backwoods etiquette demanded a degree of hospitality to any who stopped at his door.

Dinner over, McKinnon was standing by the bars of Alfred's pen when a queer thing occurred. Bill noted how the calf backed away, snorting in evident terror, as the other approached. For a space the youngster stood off, blowing and trembling, then a flare of wrath seemed to overcome his fear. With a few prancing steps he came at the trapper head down. McKinnon stepped back with a startled oath as the youngster's knobbly head thwacked against the bars. The incident set Handy wondering, helping to verify a half-formed suspicion in his mind as to whose bullet it was that had brought down Alfred's mother.

During the weeks remaining before fur season opened, Bill's heart warmed more and more to the plucky waif. It was in this interim that their relation was cemented for all time. Nothing that Bill ate or owned was too good for Alfred. The calf had a sample of everything Bill cooked. He no longer was confined to his pen, but had free run of the premises. Bill knew too well the value of freedom to put restraint on his pet. At meal time Alfred would stand with his head in at the open cabin door. He accompanied Bill at his chores and followed him on his hikes into the timber, showing no inclination at all to

wander away. Only in stormy weather did he resort to the cow shed now.

Whether it was the varied table fare he received, the tobacco habit or just plain heredity, Alfred grew fast. By the time first snow fell he could hardly be looked upon as a calf. He had been transformed from a weak-kneed, shabby-coated youngster to a rangy, long-legged young bull, whose size Bill knew to be considerably in advance of his age. He was at this time as homely and ungainly a creature as could be found in the animal world, showing little sign of the majestic, antlered monarch he would become at maturity. His big, grotesque head, surmounted by mulish ears, was shaped not unlike an old shoe; his gaunt body, with its oversize feet and big knees, gave promise of tremendous size.

Bill was away most of the days on his trap lines now, but Alfred got on very well by himself. Free to come or go at all times, he had all the joy of the completely wild elk with none of the dangers or disadvantages. He was big enough by early winter to protect himself from any save a few major killers of the forest. To Bill's relief, the inroads on his precious hay and food supply lessened rather than increased as Alfred learned more and more to shift for himself. The young bull had turned instinctively to tree-browsing after the manner of his kind; for a week at a time his only demand on Bill would be his occasional bit of tobacco.

Before spring came Alfred had achieved a lasting reputation in the country. Hunters and settlers for miles around had heard of Bill Handy's elk and most of them had climbed to the cabin to see him. Often Alfred followed Bill around his trap lines. Once he accompanied Bill clear down to the settlement in the valley and the story of that was told and magnified by all who saw it.

Alfred had been surrounded by an admiring crowd that day, plied with tobacco and all manner of food. His friendliness was boundless; he had to be forcefully restrained from following Bill into the general store. It had probably never entered Alfred's head that he was not himself a human being. At any rate, there was no doubt in his mind but that Bill was his rightful and legitimate parent. As for Bill he was firmly and militantly convinced that he owned the prize elk bull of the entire world.

There was one person, however, whom Alfred could not abide and the sight and scent of whom set him snorting and blowing belligerently. That was McKinnon. Either by sight or by scent Alfred always remembered McKinnon instantly. Bill Handy fancied he could guess the reason for every life taken by any four-footed hunter of the woods, McKinnon in his bloody work took six—took them wantonly for the pelts alone, leaving the carcasses for the scavengers. Unlike the trappers, he preyed upon the harmless folk of the cloven hoof—the deer, moose and elk. It stood to reason that all this rapine and bloodshed was to be felt in the presence of the man by super-acute senses—at least, so Handy maintained.

At any rate, each time McKinnon appeared at Handy's cabin, the young bull took up his initial battle with the man, charging toward him with lowered head and flaring nostrils. The fact set certain folk to wondering; a tale got out to the effect that even the wild critters had a grudge against McKinnon. Word of this reached the hide-hunter's ears and got under his skin not a little, reflecting as it did the dislike of almost everyone in the region.

"I'll get that danged elk of Handy's one of these days," he swore, his gnarled hand gripping his rifle.

SHORTLY after that Alfred encountered McKinnon alone in the forest; the episode branded the man in the brain

of the young bull for all time. Several times before the calf had looked upon McKinnon at his bloody work, unseen from the thickets. Then they met one day unexpectedly. Only for a half a minute was Alfred's tawny body exposed through the trees. He leapt away as he saw the flash of light on McKinnon's lifted gun. A bullet crashed along his flank as he plunged into the thickets. Two hundred yards away he stood motionless in the brush and listened to the man beating angrily through the undergrowth, stumbling and cursing. Thus Alfred learned for all time that there were savage beasts as well as god-like beings among the tribe he'd come to love.

By another summer Alfred had reached a phenomenal height for his age. Knobby horn growths were appearing on his forehead; his coat had thickened and grown tawny. He traveled miles daily along paths he had trodden through the forest, seeking the most succulent birch and willow springs. Bill would come upon him from time to time, gazing off across the wooded hills, his inscrutable little eyes full of yearning. Bill knew the nameless want the wilderness stirs in its own; something of the sort was in his own chest. He wanted to see how deeply human affection could affect Alfred's life and how long it would last in years to come. As an aid to his experiment he put a crude, square-shaped brand on Alfred's flank, that he might recognize his pet years later, if need be.

When fall came Alfred took to wandering farther and farther from the cabin. Often he remained away three or four days at a time, but always he returned. Bill watched keenly now for what he knew must transpire. This was the restless time of mating and migration for all the forest world. Alfred would have to answer the call of his blood.

One afternoon Handy saw him move off swiftly through the trees as if drawn by some burning, one-pointed purpose. His companion had gone—for a while, at least.

It was January before Bill glimpsed Alfred again. He was in company of a small band of elk that had taken refuge amid dense spruce. As the animals plunged away through deep drifts, Bill recognized Alfred and called to him in the old familiar way, hand held out. Twice the young bull halted to gaze back at his old friend, breasting the tide of new wild instincts that had risen within him. Finally he lagged far behind the herd, allowing Bill to approach within a dozen feet. On the palm of the woodsman's outstretched hand was a bit of tobacco. Foot by foot the young elk approached, sniffing with awakened memory. Finally he stretched forth his long neck and took the dainty.

Bill produced another piece, marveling at the growth his pet had made. For a few minutes he stood there, talking softly and stroking Alfred's muzzle. When he turned back toward the cabin the young bull fell in behind him. His sides were flat and sunken; he had suffered considerable during the mid-winter storms and proved it when Bill fed him that night at the cabin. He stayed until noon of the next day, then disappeared quietly into the forest.

When spring came and the elk of the region migrated back to the eastern slopes of the mountains, Alfred did not go with them. He sought Bill out in the woods one day and followed him home. All that summer he made Handy's cabin the base for his outjourneys, which were longer than ever before. In June a settler reported having seen him twenty-five miles to the north. In August he was sighted fifteen miles east. During these wanderings Handy learned, Alfred was earning a new reputation for himself as the bane of the countryside. Bolder and keener than others of his kind by reason of his continued association with humans, he had no fear of men or their

works, and many a daring raid he made on the fields and truck patches of the settlement folk. More than one irate settler went gunning for the young bull, in spite of the well known fact that Handy had set himself up as Alfred's owner and protector. Alfred, however, had learned the difference between a man unarmed and a man with a gun; a phenomenal luck seemed to attend him.

CAME a day in August when Bill, sitting at dinner, was startled to see his pet come bounding into the clearing, winded from a long run and obviously terrified. Bill went out and let down the bars of the pen. There was a trickle of blood at the base of Alfred's swelling neck where someone's bullet had creased him.

It was ten minutes later that Sled McKinnon arrived in the clearing, rifle in hand, his face seamed and twisted with rage.

"I'm goin' to kill that danged elk o' yourn right now!" he yelled hoarsely. "I'll blow him so full o' holes he'll look like a fish net! Stand aside!"

But Bill continued to stand very squarely in his path.

"Easy with the rifle, Mack. What's the trouble?"

"Don't try to bluff me with this fool tale about ownin' that elk," snarled McKinnon. "I ain't a fool. No man anywhere can own a wild critter that runs loose in the woods."

Bill pointed over his shoulder at Alfred in his pen.

"There's proof of my claim," he said. "The bull came straight to me for protection."

McKinnon vented a rabid snort. "If he's your'n like you claim, why don't you keep him out of other men's fields? He's broke down my fences and ruined my rootabaga crop. I tell ye this is the last of it."

He tried to shoulder past Bill but his way was blocked.

"I'll pay you for the damage done, but you try anything in this clearing and you'll deal with me." Handy's voice had a frosty ring that McKinnon had never heard. The hide-hunter's big fingers clenched for a moment, but he was neither a fool nor overcourageous. Looking into the blue ice of Handy's eye, he saw fit to compromise and plan a later vengeance, safe and sure. Wheeling about, he left without another word. The incident, as Bill knew, was the beginning of a lasting feud.

That fall, as usual, Bill had a visit from Nate Strode, the game warden of the district. He was deputized, as he had been several times before, as one of Strode's assistants. Besides being custodian of the region's game, Strode belonged to the local prohibition enforcement squad. The border had sprung a bad leak the past few months, Bill learned—larger and wetter than ever before, and Strode and his co-workers had been at their wits' end to locate it. The district had always been damp, but this was a leak of first magnitude. Strode had been poking into every cabin and corner in the country that might yield up a clue.

"While you're deputized by the game commission this fall," Strode told Handy, "I want you to keep your eye peeled for us. You cover a lot of territory on your trap lines, and you may run onto something that will help us. It's my opinion that a lot of this liquor isn't coming in over the line at all."

Bill had a congenital distaste for the activities of a sleuth-hound, but promised to help if he could. During the next two months as he laid out his winter trapping lines, he was busy patrolling for the government as well, issuing occasional licenses, watching for hunters who had overstepped the bag limit or killed in protected areas.

That fall marked the third year of Alfred's growth. His new set of antlers, far larger than those of the preceding

season, gave him a proud, chesty look; their splendid spread lent him a degree of that majesty that would be his when he had become a fully matured seven-tined buck. Late in September, as Bill had expected, the young bull departed over the mountain to the east in answer to the seasonal call of his clan.

It was a month later before Handy, through field glasses, glimpsed him again on the slope of a distant hill, and saw that he had come through the rutting season victorious, that he had mated and established himself as leader of a little herd of seven—six cows and a younger bull. Very noble and puissant he looked as he squired his following along the slope, pausing once to discipline the younger bull. Bill's heart gave a parental surge as he watched.

"My, but you're a beauty," he said to the surrounding scenery. "Reg'lar born bruiser, too." He chuckled to himself at a thought that came to mind. "I'll bet a season's pelts you're due to be grand exalted ruler of all the elk in this part of the country, too, barrin' some skunk's bullet doesn't bring you down. I wonder when our trails will cross again."

Handy was thankful that government had decreed a closed season on elk and that that season would be on in a few more weeks. He knew the danger of these fall days for all the antlered tribes, knew that others besides Sled McKinnon would be eager to bring down his big friend at the first opportunity. On each of his out-journeys he searched with his glasses for a sight of the bull, his sense of sponsorship undiminished, though he had little hope now that Alfred would ever return to his clearing again. The young bull had learned his strength and lordship now; his glory was upon him.

IT was on a November day just before snowfall that the two next met in a manner miraculous beyond belief. About mid-day Bill was returning to his cabin by a roundabout course, skirting a tract of tamarack swamp which he had in mind to trap that winter. The stillness of autumn was a thin and elfin melancholy in the rare, frostly air. The purple of wild grapes festooned the hardwoods, and the waxy red of ash berries stood out along the slopes.

To Bill's nostrils came abruptly the faint tang of wood smoke. Though no trace of it was visible in the clear air, he was able to follow the scent up the slight breeze that came wafting over a hill to his right. On the crest he halted, then stood as still as one of the trees about him.

Just before him the ridge fell abruptly away into a shadowy, steep-walled glen of spruce, and in the glen bottom he made out the motionless figure of a man sitting before a row of five drying racks. On each rack a long tawny hide was stretched. The man was Sled McKinnon and this was one of the hide-hunter's secret drying places far from his cabin. Five hides were drying there; four elk and a deer. Two over the bag limit already. And Bill had not yet been dismissed from his oath as deputy game warden. Duty, if nothing else, bade him investigate the situation.

Handy descended the slope carefully, keeping the tree trunks between him and the glen bottom. From time to time McKinnon's furtive glance raised to scan the surrounding woods, and each time Bill froze in his tracks. Then he saw McKinnon get up and move over to the base of a great dead tree. Removing a screen of boughs, he knelt before the broad hollow revealed at its base, and Handy, raising his glasses, made out a rude still within the trunk, a bed of glowing coals banked up beneath it. So here was where the border was leaking!

The discovery of the drying racks had surprised Handy not at all; but a still! The fanatical McKinnon, who neither smoked nor drank, was the one man in the region Handy had overlooked in summing up possible miscreants. Just here his unwary foot dislodged a stone and its faint clatter down the slope brought McKinnon upright, rifle in hand. He took in the situation in one swift glance, recognized Handy, and with a yell of insensate fury opened fire—four shots from his repeating rifle in one furious fusilade.

A sharp pain stabbed Bill's leg as he leapt behind the trunk of a big pine. The impact of the heavy bullet—almost like the blow of an ax—sent him sprawling, but he was up again and crouched behind the tree trunk before another shot could find him. Abruptly McKinnon stopped firing. From round the tree bole Bill saw the hide-hunter grimly reloading, scanning the woods meanwhile to see if Handy were alone. The man was a dangerous lunatic, as Bill had always suspected. Berserk with rage at the discovery of his secret, McKinnon meant murder, and in this remote spot he might get away with it. In a few more days the first snows would come and cover all traces of his deed.

A wave of fear went through Handy. McKinnon had him at a hopeless disadvantage. He had no weapon with him but the revolver he carried on his trapping rounds, a weapon practically useless at this range. It might serve for a time to keep McKinnon at a distance, but it would not be long before the greater range and accuracy of the rifle would win. With the fear of a prison sentence already hanging over him, McKinnon would stop at nothing.

Never before had Handy turned a weapon upon a human being, but as McKinnon began creeping up the slope, he opened fire, shouting a warning. The other ducked for shelter and Bill fled, stumbling and weaving along the slope. McKinnon's bullet had gone through the fleshy part of his leg, missing the bone, but the pain made him giddy and the leg gave under him as he leapt. He fell and rolled over but was up in an instant, plunging on in a zigzag course, for McKinnon must not have a stationary target to shoot at.

HE was making for the shelter of the swamp and had almost gained it when the hide-hunter drove him to cover again. He sent two more revolver shots whining futilely about his pursuer, his face back of the sights like gray flint as he aimed. He knew exactly what he was up against. Only two more shots were left him—he had carried only one clip with him and had already fired four times. He must save his last two bullets for close quarters. No sense of right or wrong entered the affair now; it was a cold, savage business—his own life or McKinnon's. In case McKinnon fell, a trial in court would acquit him on a plea of self defense. If not, only a miracle could save him from the other's rifle in the next few minutes.

A second rifle bullet struck his heavy boot as he made another dash for it, and gained the swamp's edge. His one chance was to hide in the heart of the thick tamaracks until nightfall. Otherwise McKinnon could hunt him down like a wounded rabbit long before he reached his cabin.

Unfamiliar with the swamp, he chose his course blindly, keeping to the higher places, jumping from hummock to hummock across the oozy places. Less than a hundred yards behind him came McKinnon, firing from minute to minute, impotently, yet much too close for safety. Bill heard him yelling and cursing in a voice high with fury. He made a desperate spurt, leaping over potholes and stretches of quaking mud. The earth trembled and rocked beneath him, but he continued taking chances, work-

ing in to the heart of the swamp like a harried fox.

The firing ceased. McKinnon's figure was lost to sight in the thickets of willow to the rear. Bill's wound was telling on him; he was sick and giddy and his trouser leg was soaked with blood. He veered sharply to the left, making for a dense labyrinth of brush where, if McKinnon did come upon him, he would have a chance to use his pistol at short range. Only the gnarled, thin trunks of the tamaracks, barbed and branchless as devil's spears, looked upon this strange chase of a human quarry.

Abruptly Bill leapt sidewise as he crossed an open stretch of mud. His feet had sunk suddenly into one of those bottomless quagmires with which the swamp was pitted. His sidewise leap had been quick enough to save him from sinking to the hips in the morass, but in so doing he had lost his revolver. By the time he fished it out of the mire it was hopelessly clogged with mud. He flung it away in disgust, and stumbled on deeper into the thickets.

In the next minute or two Handy plumbed the depths of desperation as, sick and dazed, he crouched among the willows. Weaponless now, as well as wounded. Pain was running like fire through his injured leg. No use to drag himself on until he fainted or fell into one of the swamp's suck-holes. McKinnon would find him anyway. So he sprawled where he was to wait, striving by a sheer effort of will to collect his forces for what was next to be done.

Faint through the swamp's silence he heard the chunking, sucking sound of footsteps coming nearer. McKinnon, of course, picking his way through the brush, peering ahead for a sight of his victim. Handy continued to crouch as if dead, waiting, it seemed an hour, for the final shot. For years he had been schooled by many dangers and he had learned to face them with cool brain and open eyes, but the next minute or two were the most terrible he had ever lived through as the splashing and sucking sounds came closer. At every pause he expected the crash of a bullet.

Finally he lifted his head to peep through the encircling willows. McKinnon was nowhere in sight, but half a dozen shadowy forms loomed abruptly against the gray-green of the swamp growths, not forty yards away. They came picking their way, single file, along a willow-grown peninsula that stretched into the swamp, and Handy watched them, fascinated.

A great bull elk led the file, choosing a careful way among the thickets. Every few moments he stopped to test the breeze and scan the surrounding swamp, anxiously. Apparently the band had been harried by hunters until they were in an ugly mood. Suddenly Handy drew in his breath as the big bull stepped for a moment into the open. On the left hip of the animal, unmistakable even at that distance, was the mark of a crude square brand. It was Alfred, as Handy had instinctively felt from the first.

What miracle had led the young bull and his little band into the swamp at this particular time and place went too deep into the cause and effect of things for any mind to grasp. Doubtless it was the work of that genie of the woods which seems to arrange with the most minute care those tragic dramas of the forest which men so seldom witness.

In that unclouded clairvoyance that descends on men facing death, Handy sensed all this, and did not wonder. Did not even wonder when a few moments later he saw HcKinnon's burly, leather-coated figure rise among the willows to the right of the elk, a fearsome, troll shape with his scraggly beard, malevolent eyes, seeking a sign of his victim. The little woods gods had perfectly timed this convergence of trails, and it was given to Handy, lying in his unguessed ambush to witness a strange denouement.

Intent upon vengeance, the hide-hunter failed entirely to see the elk standing masked and motionless amid the brush. So it was that he turned his steps straight toward the willow peninsula, leaping from root to grass-tussock across a stretch of quaking mud, while the eyes of Handy, watching every move, took on the gleam of sword points.

WHO shall say what promptings impelled the scene which followed? The elk were fully aware of the hunter's approach, Handy saw, but they made no move, except that the young bull turned silently to face the man and waited, moveless as a dead tree.

Whether he recognized in McKinnon his old time enemy or, in this season of queer flashes of insane courage, his hatred of humans had flamed into uncontrollable rage, cannot be said. At any rate he stood stiffly in his screen of willow, neck swollen with wrath, until McKinnon was within thirty paces, then with a whistling snort moved straight into the open with a sort of mincing movement, which turned in the last twenty feet into a charge of slashing hooves and antlers, bent on vengeance.

A very pandemonium of threshing and windy gruntings had broken upon the swamp's silence, punctuated by the clapping report of a rifle. Handy had pulled himself erect, the better to see. He had heard stories of what enraged elk bulls could do to hunters.

If McKinnon's bullet had found a mark it had no visible effect. Rearing high in air, the young bull's slashing forehoof descended like a pile driver a moment after the rifle spat. Handy saw the gun fly into the thickets and the figure of the hide-hunter, arms flung wide like a figure of straw, pitch backward into the viscous mud that ringed the peninsula. On the solid ground above, thickets crackled and splintered as if the forest were being leveled beneath the feet of giants, as the young bull continued to stamp and storm, venting sharp, whistle-like snorts of fury.

Dazed, moveless, Handy stood watching while the body of McKinnon settled imperceptibly into the quag. The man was dead, but Handy was sensible of no thrill of horror. It was the justice of the woods that had been meted out here. A train of grim finalities surged through his brain. A year before, he, Bill Handy, had saved Alfred from McKinnon's rifle. Now, by a queer balancing of cause and effect, the bull had repaid the debt.

Presently Handy moved into the open, holding forth his hand; in a voice that shook slightly he sent forth a call—the cry that had always summoned Alfred to him—low and reassuring, like the cattle-call of farmers.

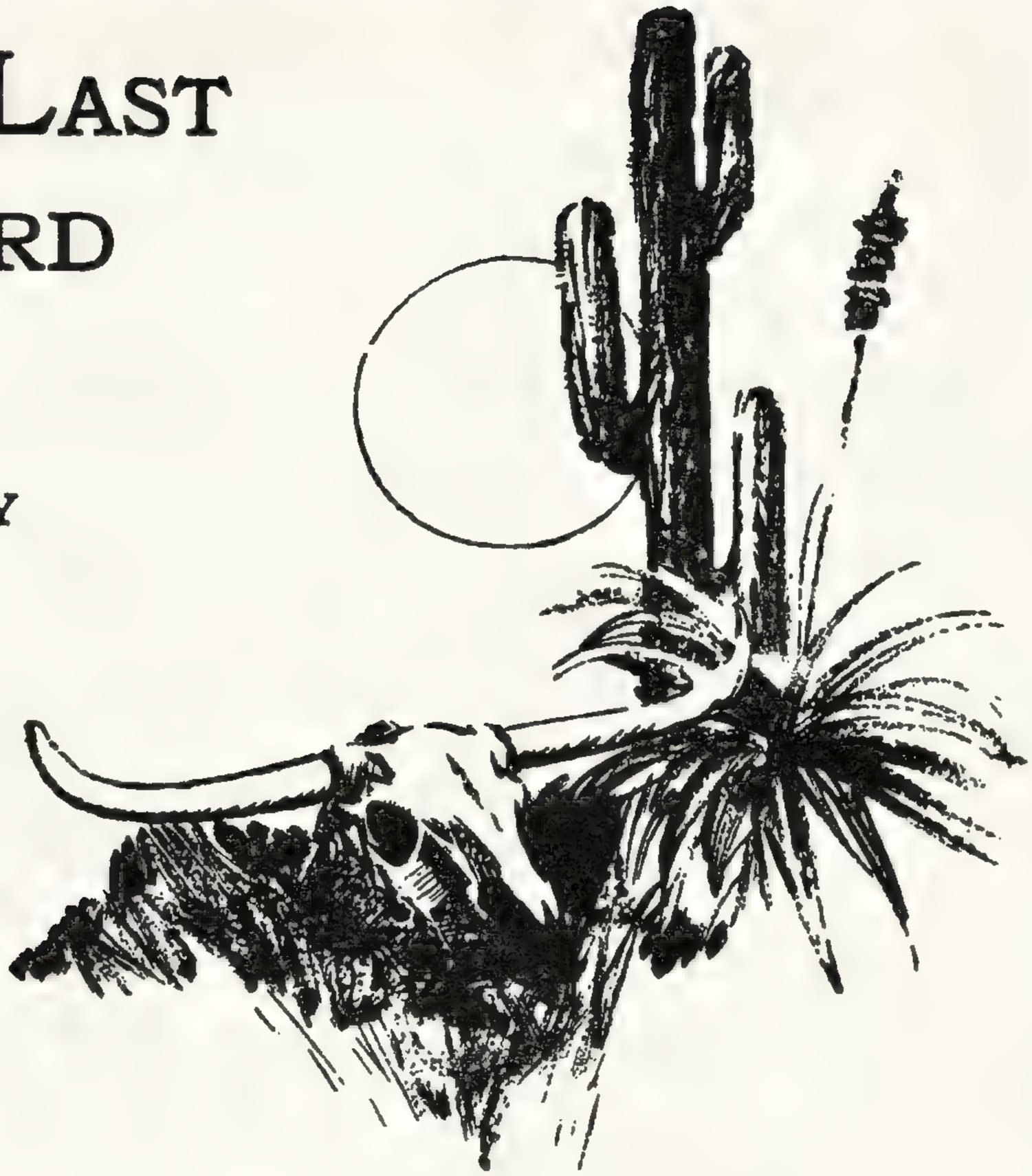
The tall bull wheeled to face him, still stamping and blowing, obviously quivering on the verge of another charge. It took several moments of quieting talk before something like recognition seemed to dawn on the tawny giant. Finally, snorting, he shook his great head and went plunging away in the wake of his frightened herd.

Bill watched him out of sight before he bent to the task of bandaging his injured leg. Before him was the ordeal of hitching his racked body over five miles of forest and reporting by telephone McKinnon's death.

Since that November day the deer and elk herds of the Coldwater region have been showing a marked and steady increase. Alfred, a glorious seven-tined bull, still can be seen leading his herd along the forest trails each fall. He has become a famous and privileged character in the countryside. The story of how he saved Handy's life that day in the tamarack swamp is still told there, minus nothing of the glamor that backwoods imagination can lend it. It has become one of the imperishable pages in the word-of-mouth history of the region.

The Last Herd

By
JOHN MURPHY



THE disappearance of the "last herd" of buffalo from the Western plains has inspired hundreds of reams of fiction and supposed fact. Yet, while they made pleasant reading, this writer wishes here to state that in none of them has the actual explanation of the phenomenon been given.

The monarchs of the plains were present in their millions in one season and on the following season they were nowhere to be found. The hunters fared forth as usual to supply the hide markets with this most valuable skin and returned empty handed. They would, they said, locate the herds in due time and it was not until a year later that they finally came to the conclusion that the buffaloes had actually disappeared and would be seen no more.

It is true that there were scattered bands of the animals and it was from these few that the present large herds in captivity were bred. But the world accepted with very little comment the supposed fact that the herds were gone forever.

It was not until a short time before the commencement of this century that word began to drift down from the north that a species of buffalo had been found in the neighborhood of Fort Smith on the MacKenzie River. These animals were reported to be of smaller size than the plains buffalo and were named wood buffalo to distinguish them. Word later came that poachers were killing off these animals for their hides much as the plains hunter had decimated the plains buffalo. It was as a result of this

report that the Canadian government sent out a party which included Ernest Thompson Seton, world famous naturalist, to investigate the report.

The Canadian government party, headed by a Mounted Police Sergeant, was discouraged by the natives and white trappers from entering the habitat of the wood buffalo. The country was covered with about eight feet of water, it was infested by a very large and vicious type of timber wolf which would most certainly do for the party as it had done for the most of the buffaloes; and, besides that, there were a lot of evil spirits bouncing around that part of the world in an angry mood, according to the natives.

The party found the buffaloes about the appointed territory and made observations as to their size and habits. They discovered that these buffaloes were, if anything, larger than the plains specimens in captivity and were in excellent shape. They also discovered that human beings and not wolves had been doing the damage to their herds.

Upon the party's return a report on the situation was submitted to the government and immediate action taken. A fine of $500 was posted for any person killing a buffalo and officers of the R.N.W.M.P. were assigned to enforce the law. Today this herd is estimated at about 20,000 animals, none of which have been in captivity. In addition, several thousand have been recently transferred to the great Canadian Buffalo park at Wainright, Alberta, and are reported to be getting along well with the native animals.

A very ancient settler at Last Mountain, Saskatchewan, mentioned that the last herd had passed his abode and had been so large that it had taken three days to pass a given point. They were followed, he said, by a small band of hunters, and many gray wolves were noted in the vicinity at about the same time. He had remarked at the time a curious singleness of purpose in the manner of the herd. They seemed to pay little attention to the harassing hunters and headed in a northwesterly direction.

Another old-timer living still farther to the northwest observed a similar phenomenon, and it is worthy of note that he too placed the time required for the herd to pass at three days. This observation was made in the neighborhood of Big Manitou Lake on the border between Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The most significant and easily confirmed fact lies in the immense boneyards which grew up along the supposed route of the migrating animals. The towns of Regina, Saskatoon and Battleford, lying in a northwesterly line, are all in possession of photographs of their boneyards. These bones gathered from the immediate vicinity of these towns in their infancy were piled up like cordwood for miles along the railroad tracks waiting for shipment to the sugar refineries.

In the long trek which brought the herd to the Fort Smith country, many fell by the wayside, victims either of the hunters, the wolves or the hardships of the journey.

This explanation of the disappearance of the "last herd" was concurred with by the Canadian government official in charge of the Fort Smith Game Preserve. The wood buffalo and the plains buffalo, he said, are the same animal. The larger size of the wood animal is explained by him as being due to the protection afforded by the bush country, the more abundant fodder and the freedom from persecution by hunters. In support of this deduction he cites the example of the woodland caribou and the barren lands caribou. The woodland variety, while the same in most respects, is about twice the size of its barren lands cousin.

THE CAMP-FIRE

The meeting place for readers writers and adventurers.

GORDON MacCREAGH, who allowed there might be room for argument or discussion about some of the facts in his novelette, "Wardens of the Big Game," sends the following message to Camp-Fire as a way of getting his own artillery into position first. He writes from Florida, where he has just gathered together a canoe, a tent and two Seminole Indians for a few weeks of exploring in the Everglades.

An ivory poacher I know. He's so damn good that the Kenya government has written him off as a sort of public enemy Number One; and the wardens finally made things so hot for him that he has to live across the border in Abyssinia; so when he goes hunting now, he's raiding foreign territory where they'll arrest him on sight.

Though this fellow is a decent chap. He's not an elephant murderer; he's just a breaker of game laws. He goes out with a 30.06 Springfield and takes his chance on foot and alone, and he laughs at the expensive sports who come out with a store of book knowledge and a battery of heavy .475s.

For years this bright lad used to skim by the edge of the law. Kenya law is that 100 pounds sterling license must be taken out for each elephant. Except that an elephant may be shot at any time in defense of life or property, property being a native village or a yam patch. So the poacher, having located his elephants, would catch the nearest native and would pay him half a dozen empty brass cartridge shells to come along and dig up a couple of square yards of ground every here and there and plant yam sprouts. And then it was darned hard luck and poor game knowledge if the poacher couldn't lure his elephant somewhere near one of the "plantations."

And at that, sometimes, he'd make his plantation after he had had to shoot his elephant in some unfavorable spot.

Lest there be some one who'll rear up and say you can't go shooting elephant with a thirty calibre, let me say right here that I can produce at least three men in N. Y. who have done so, and a couple of white hunters in East Africa who have discarded all other heavy guns for the 30.06 as an all around rifle.

And in preparation for some other fellow who will likely up and grumble that you can't shoot elephant with a machine gun, let me pass along this one.

There was a certain Commissioner, a queer duck, one of those religious maniac people who hated all sport in any form. Hunting, killing anything, was anathema to him. Well, maybe he was right; but that's neither here nor there. He was commissioner over a district where every white man hunted.

This happened to be not in Africa, but in Burma, where the law is that elephant—even a rogue that has gone savage—must be reported by the Commissioner to the Chief of the Keddah Dept., who will then proscribe such elephant as an outlaw that may be shot by anybody at any time without license.

An elephant went bad in his district, and every local white man clamored to have the thing outlawed so he might go out on a hunt that would be considerable of a sporting proposition.

The Commissioner had to accede to public clamor, although he hated to let anybody have that much fun, killing something. So he reported the beast's depredations to the Ked-

dah Chief; and in due course the mail brought the order of outlawry.

Whereupon the fanatical Commissioner, in sheer cussedness, at the same time that he posted the outlawry notice proscribing the elephant as a dangerous animal, ordered out a squad of military police to take the field against this menace to public safety. And, so as to make sure the police would get the first crack at it, he telegraped the outpost nearest to the elephant's doin's.

The local police sahib happened to be away; so the carrying out of the order fell upon the native sergeant, who had no desire to go out hunting a bad elephant at any time. So the sergeant gathered up his trembling men, loaded them up with the depot machine gun, and a hunting they all did go.

And—damned beginner's luck—they found the elephant within a couple of hours, and they pumped it full of machine gunnery till it lay down and died.

And they went home and reported that they had duly executed the menace to public safety.

And then came a frantic teak lumberman and demanded a frightful indemnity for his tame elephant that had just been browsing around, the way teak elephants are allowed to do. Sometimes they'll travel for miles, looking for succulent fodder; and they can be relied upon to come back.

Later a court decided that the Commish had to pay the just indemnity. In the meanwhile a local white sportsman got the real bad elephant, and another brainy lad went out and shot him a perfectly good elephant and claimed loudly that he thought it was the bad one; and the Commish, with his henchmen's example blatant before him, didn't dast say a word.

FROM Dutch Flat, California, Bill Adams writes to us about his ironic little yarn in this issue, and the man who saw the mermaids.

There is a lot of truth in the old saying: "A woman and a dog are out of place in a ship." A dog aboard ship is an abomination, to my way of thinking; and I'd not care to sail in a ship where a woman was.

As for "A Decent Sailorman," there is a lot of truth in that little yarn. No fooling. Polly was a good egg. He is still alive. I heard from him a month or so ago, after not having heard a thing of or from him in over thirty years. A lot of things can happen in thirty years. Polly has been master for very many years, but has remained single. I guess he ain't changed very much. He was one of those shy sort of chaps who'd blush if a girl looked at him. Once in Liverpool my particular pal and I fixed it up with a very good-looking barmaid to bring Polly in some evening and have her kiss him. He never drank, but we got him into the pub all right. We only drunk once in a while "for the stomach's sake," as St. Paul said. The barmaid put her arms round his neck and kissed him and I never saw anything funnier than the way he looked.

He was a crackling fine sailor from toe to crown. And a most careless devil. He'd grab a gasket on a royal, and, hanging to it with both hands, lean back with all his weight; his big feet on the slender little foot-rope that was liable to part at any second with his close to 200 pounds on it. He'd jerk, and jerk, and you'd have thought he was on the solid deck instead of 170 feet or so above the water. He led a charmed life. One day when he was standing on the anchor which hung ready for dropping, something went wrong and the blamed thing did drop; with him on it. He vanished and we all knew we'd not see him again. But up he came, grinning all over and shouted, "What damned fool let go that anchor?"

He was a dreamy sort too. He came from the wheel one night vowing he'd seen some genuine mermaids swimming round the stern, and heard them calling to him. He, who cared never about girls ashore, was sadly in love with the mermaids. He absolutely swore that they were real. When we accused him of having fallen asleep at the wheel and having a dream, he got mad as the devil. I think that what he really did was to fall into a trance and steer just as usual. There was a light breeze, and she was making maybe four an hour. The only time I ever knew him to have any truck with a girl was in Astoria. And he wasn't fully all there at the time. He fell from the top of the midship house and got a bit of a bump and was taken to hospital. He was turned out of the hospital a few minutes after he regained consciousness because he absent-mindedly sat up in bed, leaned over, and kissed a good looking young sister of mercy on the back of her neck. Yes, he was a very dreamy sort of a chap indeed; but he was born to the sea. I guess he will soon be retiring now.

Excuse all this pow-wow about females please. They don't belong in ships and I can't write about 'em because I don't know a dern thing about how they act. They used to get my goat when I was an officer in passenger steamers. I never could figure 'em out and I never tried. You can put your trust in a ship and she won't go back on you; but heaven help the one who puts it in a gal. Not that I have anything against 'em. I'm just expressing my general sentiments, so to speak.

That business of swapping round the pictures of girls was the regular custom. A dern good custom, too. Many the whack of marmalade, or Harriet Lane, or salt horse, that has come to me in trade for the picture of a swell clipper-built gal to whom I had vowed

eternal devotion, eh? One did that sort of thing just to get pictures one could swap for grub and baccy. Ah, Youth!

SAMUEL ALEXANDER WHITE'S three-part story, "Canoemen of the Crimson Star," is a carefully historic work, done not only out of the author's research but his own background and experience. He says:

The place of my birth, a Canadian pioneer village successively called Buffy, Edmonton and Snelgrove, was the first influence that started me on the northland fiction trail. The family profession was the second. Being a son of the late Canadian naturalist and teacher, James White, noted collector of plants, insects, birds, etc., and brother of J. Herbert White, Doctor of the Science of Forestry, University of Toronto, it was natural that I should eventually become a school teacher also and at the same time turn to the outdoors.

At the age of two I made my initial pilgrimage after material, a four-year sojourn in Western Ontario, and ever since have been stalking more material, in canoe or on snowshoe, with gun, fishing rod, blow-pipe, butterfly-net or telescope in hand. Bread-and-butter education comprised public, collegiate, model and correspondence schools. I spent several years in teaching, but the lure of the mining camps and fur posts proved too strong and I abandoned the schoolroom to join the earliest Cobalt silver rush.

This Northern Ontario country from the Ottawa River to the Manitoban boundary and from the Nipissing to James Bay has been the scene of a good many of my tales including the major portion of "Canoemen of the Crimson Star." Canadian historical research and the adventurous phases of northland life exploiting the land's vast resources of forest, mineral, fur, fish and game have provided me with inspiration for stories of Alaska and the Yukon, the old prairie West, the Great Lakes, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Labrador, the Maritime and Terranovan shores, but nothing has been so inspiring as the history of that ancient and honorable company of adventurers. The Hudson Bay Company's tale is Canada's tale.

The H. B. C. is the Dominion. Even in this day of airplane service to isolated posts, the spirit of the Company, "the most gigantic trust the world would ever see," still dominates the North, although its charter is surrendered.

The crimson star, of course, is the blood-red, five-pointed star which has always been its symbol and "Canoemen" is accurately descriptive and completely authentic although cast in fiction form. Rupert's Land, the vast undefined region in the interior, now a part of New Ontario, Manitoba and N. W. Territories was at the time of the story under control of the H. B. C. whose sovereignty over that wild and extensive territory amounted to an absolute monarchy. The rights of the H. B. C. to monopolize the valuable fur trade of the district were not respected by all. From time to time rival organizations were formed to invade the territory and secure a share of the riches. The most powerful of these was the North West Fur Company organized in Montreal in 1783. The agents of the N. W. F. C. were a band of hardy, fearless "Nor'westers" who were determined to maintain a foothold in the district by fair means or foul. They succeeded in gaining the confidence of dissatisfied Indian tribes and established armed posts in the heart of the fur country. The invasion of this intrepid crew was destined to arouse the latent energy of the H. B. C. to assert its sovereignty and to crush its rival, a result that was attained only after a campaign of siege and battle in which much blood was spilled and deeds of valor on the part of followers of both companies were the rule.

Real names are not mentioned in "Canoemen," but the tragic experience and ensuing exile of the Factor is based on a true incident involving an American family. Oxford House is real enough, a well-known trading spot, one of the oldest company posts. The other characters are drawn from northern types both native and imported. Scotch-English-Irish emigrated in the wake of the fur lords—the chief trader, the courier, the French heroine, the Factor's daughter, the voyageurs and Indians like Maskwa and Wahbiscaw bowsman and steersman with their amidships paddlers called mid-men or middlemen. Canoe brigades, fur trains, mail packets, palisaded forts have been described in actual detail.

OWEN ATKINSON, whose story, "A Gringo Bullfighter," is his first to appear in *Adventure*, writes that he has been a professional fictioneer for the last ten years and that he has written and published over three million words, his stories having appeared in a great many magazines under several pen names.

He confesses that when he returned from France after the war his main idea was to enter a profession which would allow him to travel and at the same time earn a living. He went out to Honolulu

and worked on a newspaper for four years, but got restless and had to go back to New York City before he could write about Hawaii with any feeling. He lived in Paris a while, where he wrote stories about New York. Then he went out to California and wrote about France.

He admits that he has never seen a bull fight outside of Mexico, but says that during his last trip to Mexico City he saw a number of young *novilleros,* who looked as if they might provide serious competition for the more famous Spanish *matadors.*

He has just purchased a prune ranch near Los Gatos, California, where, unless the wanderlust gets him again, he hopes to settle down to writing in the mornings and watching the prunes grow in the afternoons.

WHO can help Phil Westhoff, of Papeete, Tahiti, with his problem of trying to have cold beer under the tropic palms, without ice or electricity?

There are quite a bunch of us old plugs out here, both in Tahiti and across the bay in Moorea. Most of us own our own homes and are settled here for life. We all make our own home brew, but sometimes we are sorely put to it for low temperature. Do you know anything in the way of a refrigerator, without electricity and the elaborate icebox? There have been samples shipped out here on trial but they cost a lot and altho they look very pretty, enamel and nickel-plated, fit for any man's home, that stuff deteriorates very fast in this damp climate.

ONE of our seagoing comrades sends in a criticism of our March First cover.

A shipmate of mine on the *Edwin L. Shea* when we landed in Bayonne, called my attention to the cover of March first issue of *Adventure,* the one with the sailor in the red sweater trying to show the monkey how to tie a knot, saying, "Isn't that pretty good?" I don't want to criticize, especially since this issue has some stories by a couple of my favorite authors, Tuttle, Pendexter, etc., but the artist who painted that picture of a monkey did not know his stuff. I am in a position to speak about this, because I was once made a present of a monkey by a pal who owed me some money and could not pay, and I undertook to teach that monkey how to tie knots as the fellow on the cover is doing. No monkey would ever get himself tangled up as that one has. After all they are used to climbing around vines, etc., in the jungle, so a piece of twine or string would be nothing to them. They are pretty cute little sons of guns if you know what I mean. Also where did that sailor get the clothes line he is using? I never saw a sailor with any line like that in my life. I suppose the artist thought it was sennit. Please excuse my criticism. We *Adventure* fans like to see our magazine right in every way.

SPEAKING of animals and their ways, Lynn Bogue Hunt brought some drawings into the office the other day that caused us to suspend work for a while. As you probably know, Mr. Hunt is a well known illustrator of wild life, and the drawings he had done depicted with vividness and fidelity some of the beasts that too many of us get to see only in a zoo, if at all. But what gave the drawings their unique interest was this: each one was not only a striking representation of a wild animal, but it showed as well the tracks that animal makes. There is something fascinating about animal tracks—something handed down to us from our far distant forefathers. It is the same thing that today sends a small boy plowing tirelessly through the snow after the prints of a rabbit that may have passed that way two days before.

We are going to share these interesting pictures with you. Hereafter, when there is space to be filled at the end of a story, you are likely to see an elephant stalking along the page and under the elephant the queerly shaped marks that an African native would recognize in an instant.
—H.V.B.

ASK ADVENTURE

—information you can't get elsewhere

CAN a reader furnish this information?

Request:—How are the newest types of bullet-proof vests constructed? That is to say, are they one piece metal like old-time armor or are they still made of many tiny scales of metal such as the writer wore under a peace officer's badge in Wyoming as late at '25.

Of course the foregoing is to settle a discussion with a friend. Therefore each type defined and explained as to construction and popularity with the various departments will be greatly appreciated.

—ANDREW THICKSTUN, Strawberry Valley, Calif.

Reply by Mr. F. H. Bent:—I'm sorry. I'm afraid you are away beyond my depth when it comes to a discussion on bullet-proof vests. I haven't got that far yet.

However, maybe I can put you on a path that will lead you to an answer to your question. Have you tried the Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory, 469 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill.? This laboratory is connected with the Northwestern University, and their business is the testing of such equipment, scientific solving of mysteries, etc.

BRAIDED rabbit skin may be warm —but tickly.

Request:—Regarding rabbit skin sleeping robe used by Indians; what is a good home method of tanning skins? As to the strips: how wide? what stitch is used in sewing? kind of thread?

—ORRIS L. WEBSTER, Hoquiem, Wash.

Reply by Mr. F. L. Bowden:—The skins in most cases are merely dried. Rabbits are so plentiful in most places where robes of this sort are used that not much care is taken in preparing the skins. Neither are those who use them very fussy about whether the skins shed or not.

The skins are dried, and cut into strips about one inch wide, cutting around and around the skin. After which the strips are braided (regular three-strand braid), after which these braids are sewn together the same as a braided rug, or if you wish a warmer robe you can braid three of these strands (braided) together.

In most cases white men do not use these rabbit-skin sleeping robes. In the first place these rabbit skins will surely shed and keep on shedding hair until there is none left on the skins. The natives who make and use these robes care nothing for this, and just let 'em shed and be darned. A white man gets tired after a while of combing rabbit hair out of his own (if any), also of the tickling and itching which these hairs cause when he starts to perspire, and therefore beats it for the nearest trading post and in some manner or other wheedles the trader out of a good commercial sleeping robe.

If a man is looking for warmth alone and doesn't care about the other objectionable features the rabbit-skin robe is O.K., otherwise not worth the trouble.

THE slightest quiver of a shiver—and precise photographic definition is impossible, unless you do it this way.

Request:—In the February 1st issue of *Adventure* you recommend focussing with the aid of a bolometer, in taking an infra-red picture in visual darkness.

Would you be kind enough to tell me what a bolometer is—how it works?

I have had difficulty in focussing infra-red shots in daylight, using Eastman R infra-red plates, their 88, a deep red filter in gelatine, and a camera with a two-inch Zeiss Novar lens. I was aware that red does not come to a focus in the same plane as the other colors, so, taking a distant landscape, I focussed on infinity, stopped down to F.22. But in spite of the small stop and the great depth the two-inch lens has naturally, the resulting pictures were slightly out of focus. I tried some focussing at fifty feet, taking the same picture, with similar unsatisfactory focus. Possibly the cheap lens is badly uncorrected for red.

Any information you can give me relative to proper focussing of infra-red pictures in daylight will be very much appreciated.

—NEWTON AVRUTIS, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Paul Anderson:—A bolometer is an instrument for measuring slight differences of temperature by means of the change in resistance of a wire carrying an electric current. But I do not feel that you need or want one for your purpose; it is a very delicate scientific instrument.

With your lens, the difference between the plane of the visible rays and that of the infra-red would probably not be more than one-half millimeter when the lens was used at full opening, and stopping down to F/22 would far more than take care of that. Unless your camera is precision-built, the plane of the film is probably different from that of the ground glass, but F/22 would take care of this difference, too. But with the relatively long exposures necessary for infra-red at F/22, it is probable that vibration of the camera would prevent critical definition. For example, on the twentieth floor of a New York office building, it is practically out of the question to give longer than $\frac{1}{25}$ second and get precise definition, and when working with landscape and vibration of the earth, plus motion of the air, will often prohibit longer exposures than $\frac{1}{10}$ second. I believe that a rigid tripod, with a wider opening of the lens, to permit shorter exposures, will solve your problem. It may be that a tent, to protect your camera from the breeze, will be necessary. And it may be that your lense is one of those in which the focal plane shifts when it is stopped down. However, that can readily be checked by combined inspection and exposure with visible light. If focussing is done without the filter, and the filter is placed on the lens afterwards, this sometimes causes trouble with an inaccurately ground filter. However, if you are using a gelatine filter, the trouble is not there. If you use a filter which passes any visible light, a focussing microscope will enable you to focus with the filter in position, and then you can be sure whether or not your trouble is in vibration, as I strongly suspect it is.

EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, 250 Bronxville Rd., Bronxville, N. Y.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 117 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Coins: *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 1208, Orlando, Fla.

Fishing: *salt and fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose St., N. Y. C.

Health Building Activities, Hiking—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 1208, Orlando, Fla.

Horses: *care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting; jumping; and polo; horses of old and new West*—MAJOR THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1709 Berkley Ave., Pueblo, Calif.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., care American Tourist Camp Ass'n., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Yosemite, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Old Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Oriental Magic and Effects—JULIEN PROSKAUER, 148 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 3, Box 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

★Skiing and Snowshoeing—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 134 N. 4th St., Columbus, Ohio.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachute gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Box 575, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America. Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

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tion, portable sets—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

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Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J.

Navy Matters: *United States and Foreign*—LT. COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U. S. N. (retired), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Fla.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—PATRICK LEE, 157-11 Sanford Ave., Flushing, N. Y.

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U. S. Marine Corps—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R. F. D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, Calif.

World War: *strategy, tactics, leaders, armies, participants, historical and political background*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

The Sea, Part 1 *British and American Waters Ships, seamen, statistics, record, oceans, waterways, seas, islands. Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Cape Horn, Magellan Straits, Mediterranean Sea, Islands and Coasts.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, P. O. Box 238, Benjamin Franklin Sta., Washington, D. C. ★**2** *Antarctica*—F. LEONARD MARSLAND, care *Adventure.*

The Tropics—SEYMOUR POND, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. AEMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand; Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies*—V. B. WINDLE, care *Adventure.* **2** *Annam, Loas, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China, Southern and Eastern China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3, Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Japan*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntingdon Ave., Scarsdale, N. Y. **5** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.* **6** ★*Palestine*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C.

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Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

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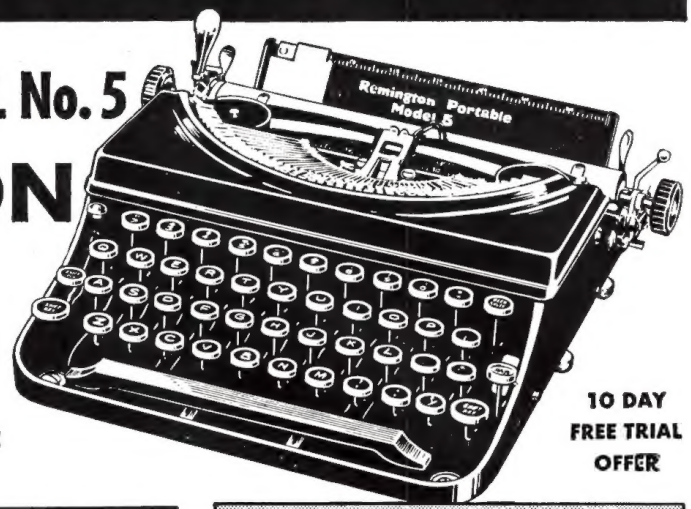

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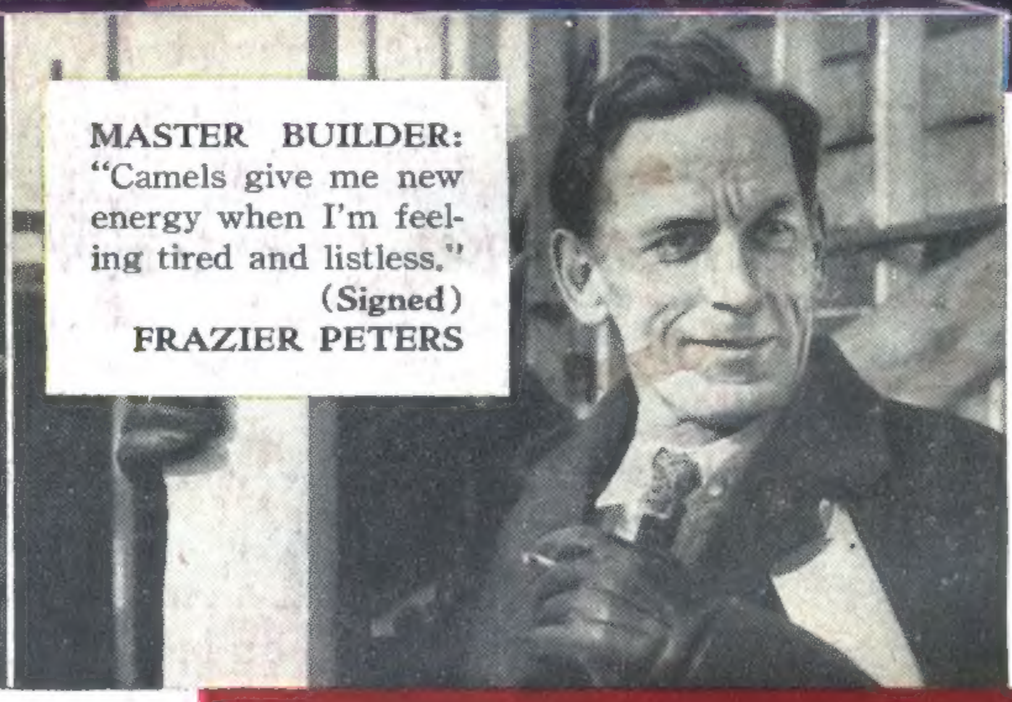

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